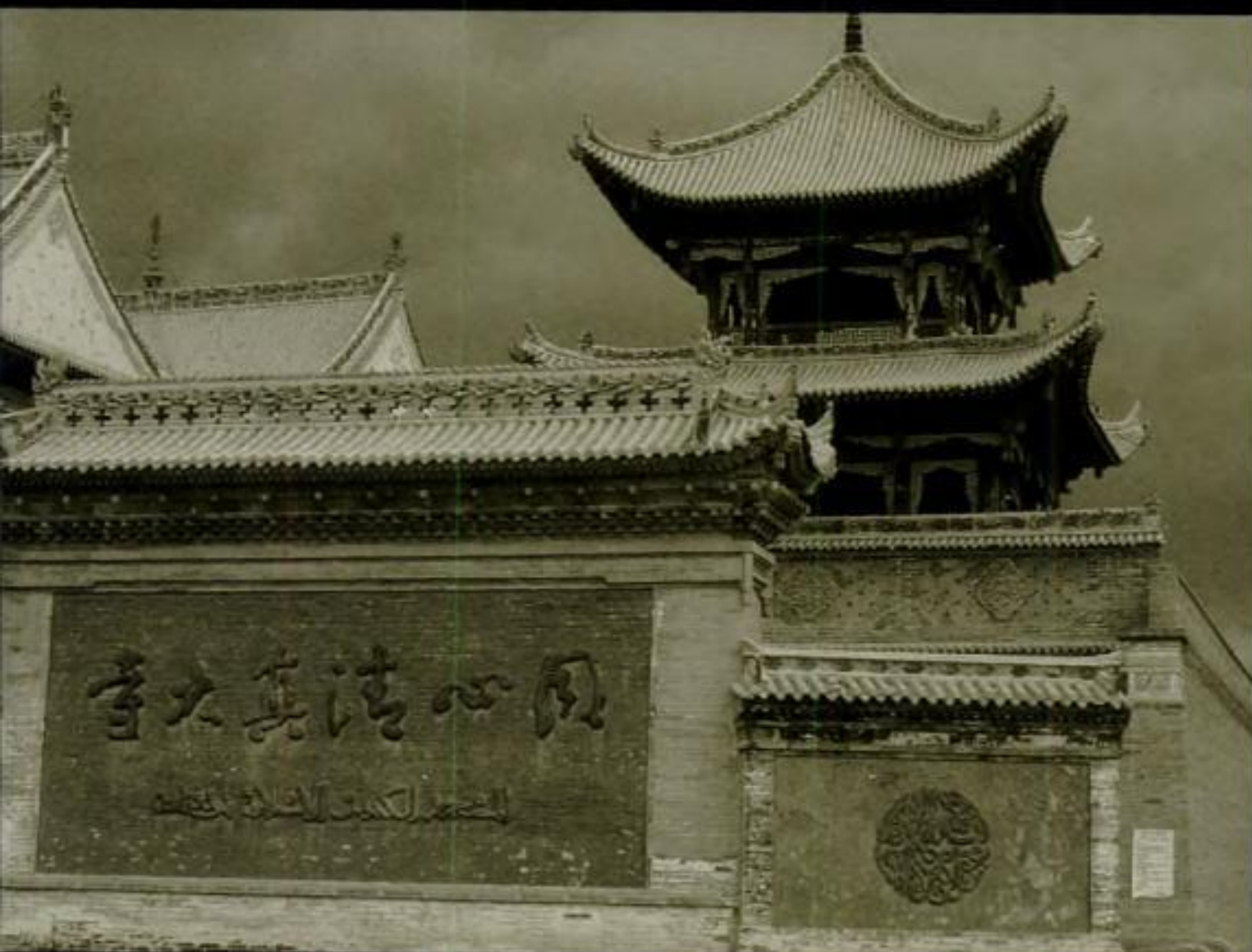


China's Muslim Hui Community

**Migration, Settlement
and Sects**

MICHAEL DILLON



China's Muslim Hui Community

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Michael Dillon

This book reconstructs the history of the Hui Muslim community in China (known as the Chinese Muslims as distinct from the Turkic Muslims such as the Uyghurs), and traces their history from the earliest period of Islam in China up to the present day.

Jacket Photograph:
The Great Mosque at Tongxin

CHINA'S MUSLIM HUI COMMUNITY

This One



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**CHINA'S MUSLIM
HUI COMMUNITY**
MIGRATION, SETTLEMENT
AND SECTS

Michael Dillon

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My early interest in China's north-west frontier was aroused by my first teacher of Chinese history, Owen Lattimore (1900–89), Professor of Chinese in the University of Leeds from 1963–9, who made a point of lecturing to first year undergraduates so that they would at least recognise the head of department. His lectures incorporated his reminiscences of China in the first half of the present century and, although it has taken me some time to come round to research on the northern and northwestern frontiers of China that were his stamping ground, I am pleased to have an opportunity to acknowledge the influence of his work.

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consult of his several unpublished papers. He has helped me to avoid many pitfalls. I remain, of course solely responsible, for errors of commission and omission.

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Chinese and Arabic terms

Romanisation and Abbreviations

Chinese words in the text have been romanised according to the *Hanyu pinyin* 汉语拼音, (Chinese phonetic) system, usually abbreviated to Pinyin, which was developed in China in the nineteen fifties and sixties based on the Latinisation experiments of the nineteen twenties.

For Arabic terms, I have tried to use the most generally acceptable form and have been guided by, but may not always have followed, Ian Richard Netton *A Popular Dictionary of Islam* (Curzon, 1992). Chinese terms for Islamic religious orders, concepts and names have not been translated unless there is a clear Arabic equivalent.

The names of Muslims in China in the period before the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) have mostly been left in the romanised form of the Chinese transliteration of their Arabic, Persian or Turkish names unless the original name is known or an obvious equivalent suggests itself.

Explanations of Abbreviations and Terms

Some of the terms used in this book will be self-explanatory to China specialists and others to students of Islam. Some are used in a way which may be unacceptable to purists in either field, so it seems sensible to state at the outset what is meant by some terms. Many of these are explained in more detail in the main body of the text, so the explanations here are brief and often oversimplified. Many place names, including the names of provinces have changed frequently over the centuries. Unless otherwise stated, place names in this book are those in use today.

Ahong 阿訇 the usual term for Imams and other Muslim religious leaders in China, derived from the Persian *Akhund*.

Autonomous Region, Prefecture and County areas designated as the homelands of ethnic minority groups and granted a limited autonomy. Ningxia (see below) is the designated Autonomous Region for the Hui

CCP Chinese Communist Party.

Chinese Muslims This is usually used to mean Hui Muslims, but is ambiguous and has been avoided in this book where possible.

Chinese Used to mean citizens of China, regardless of ethnic background. It is also used to refer to the state or local authorities of China. See also Han.

CPPCC Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the united front organisation created to give limited representation to the interests of groups other than the CCP.

Dongxiang 东乡 Muslim ethnic minority group who are speakers of a language in the Mongolian family.

Dungans see Hui

Gansu 甘肃 Province in northwestern China with a large Muslim population. Its capital is Lanzhou 兰州.

Gedimu 格迪目 the orthodox mainstream of Islam in China, deriving from the Arabic *al-Qadim* 'the ancient'

GMD Guomindang 国民党, Nationalist Party. It was abbreviated in the past as KMT after the Wade-Giles system romanisation, Kuomintang.

gongbei 拱北 tombs of Sufi and other *shaykhs*, from the Arabic *qubba*, meaning 'dome' or 'cupola' after one of the prominent features of most tombs.

Han 汉 The majority population of China. For all practical purposes, this means all citizens of China who are not assigned to or do not belong to any other ethnic group.

Hezhou 河州 known today as Linxia 临夏 and often referred to as China's 'Little Mecca'.

Hui 回 In present day China, Muslims who are not classified as Uyghur, Kazakh etc. Historically, the term has also been used to mean Muslim, of whatever ethnic group, but with a bias towards Muslims of Persian-speaking Central Asian origin. They are also known as Huihui 回回 or Dungans.

Kazakh Turkic-speaking ethnic group, mostly living in Kazakhstan but with a significant population in Xinjiang. Traditionally they have been nomadic pastoralists.

Kyrgyz Turkic-speaking ethnic group, mostly living in Kyrgyzstan but with a substantial population in Xinjiang, particularly in the western border regions. Also formerly spelt Kirgiz.

madrasa (Arabic) Islamic school or college, usually associated with a mosque or other religious foundation.

menhuan 门宦 hereditary Sufi orders.

Muslims When referring to the inhabitants of China, this indicates both practising Muslims and members of ethnic groups which are traditionally Muslim.

Ningxia 宁夏 Since 1958 this has meant the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. Before 1949, it usually refers to the city known today as Yinchuan 银川, now the capital of that region. Before 1949, the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region was part of Gansu province.

Qur'an This spelling has been used rather than Koran.

Salar Turkic-speaking Muslim ethnic group based in eastern Qinghai province and neighbours of the mainly Chinese-speaking Hui in southwestern Gansu.

Shaanxi 陕西 and **Shanxi** 山西 Two provinces in northern China, easily distinguished in written Chinese because the first character is different but which should logically both be written Shanxi in *Pinyin* romanisation. By convention, the westerly one, of which Xi'an is the capital, is written Shaanxi to indicate that the first syllable is pronounced in the third, dipping, tone.

Tajik Ethnic group who speak Tajik, a language closely related to Persian. They live mainly in Tajikistan but there is a small population in Xinjiang.

Taozhou 桃州 known today as Lintan 临潭.

Uyghur Turkic-speaking ethnic group who form the majority of the population of Xinjiang. The name has also been spelled Uighur and Uygur.

Xinjiang 新疆 The literal English translation is 'New Frontier' and it is the administrative region in the far northwest of China. Its official name is the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (*Xinjiang Weiwuer Zizhiqu* 新疆维吾尔自治区), after the Muslim Uyghur people who make up the majority of the population. It was previously spelled Sinkiang. Many Uyghurs, especially emigrés who support separatist movements refer to it as Eastern Turkestan (*Sharqi Turkistan*).

Preface

The Great Mosque of Tongxin stands on high ground in the northwest quarter of the Old Town. Tongxin is a thriving Hui community in the centre of the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region and over a hundred miles south of its administrative centre, Yinchuan. From a distance the mosque looks like many traditional Buddhist temples in China, and it was as such a temple that it started life. It was probably built in the fourteenth century during the Mongol occupation of China which they termed the Yuan dynasty. Because it was a Mongol Lama Buddhist temple and not one used by Chinese Buddhists, as soon as the Mongols were driven out by the forces of the Ming in 1368, it was taken over by Muslims from Central Asia who had followed the conquering Mongol armies into China to settle in the area, and was reconsecrated as a mosque.¹ The mosque was renovated in the sixteenth century and again in 1791 and 1907. The present structure reflects the 1907 rebuilding. More recently, it survived the Cultural Revolution which began in 1966, unlike many local mosques and other religious foundations throughout China, because the local people protected it, as the Chairman of the Tongxin Political Consultative Committee told me proudly, and it was restored in a programme that began in 1981.²

According to the Imam, there are normally a few dozen worshippers for daily prayers, but several hundred on a Friday. During my visit fifteen to twenty men of all ages were waiting outside the prayer hall. Behind the mosque, in the cemetery reached

1 There are records of Mongol lamaseries, possibly of the older Red Sect, that persisted into the Ming dynasty and were not converted to mosques in what is now Qinghai and other parts of western China. See C.R. Bawden *The Modern History of Mongolia*, London 1989, p 27.

2 Interviews in Tongxin September 19, 1992. Information on plaques outside mosque. See also *Dangdai Zhongguo de Ningxia* p 30.

through a gate in the wall, are the carefully tended shrines of two Sufi saints, or more correctly *shaykhs*, a testament to the parallel Islam which kept the faith alive when the Qing imperial government or the Communist Party tried to suppress it. From the cemetery, there is an excellent view of the town of Tongxin and of two other mosques which were pointed out to me, one *Gedimu*, a representative of the oldest and most orthodox form of Islam in China, the other attended by members of the *Jahriyya Zheherenye* Sufi brotherhoods. The Great Mosque itself today follows the *Yihewani* sect, probably the Chinese equivalent of the brotherhoods of the Wahhabi movement of Saudi Arabia. See Chapters 7–9 for details of these sects.

A battered wooden tablet on the wall near the entrance to the mosque records a fateful encounter, the first contact between the Hui people and members of the Chinese Communist Party. On its Long March (October 1934 to October 1935) to escape from the siege and bombardment of the Guomindang Nationalist armies, the Red Army of the Communist Party passed through the districts of northwest China inhabited by Hui Muslims. As part of its policy of cultivating ethnic minority communities to build support against the Guomindang, and against the Japanese who were on the eve of invading China and who had visions of an independent Muslim state as part of their divide and rule policy, the CCP established autonomous local governments for a number of Hui communities. The Yuhai County Soviet Hui Autonomous Regime (*Yuhai xian Suwei'ai zizhi zhengquan* 预海县苏维埃自治政权) was established at what is now Tongxin in Ningxia. This was the first autonomous region established with CCP support and provided the model for ethnic minority policy in the communist-controlled liberated areas in the 1940s and later in various parts of the People's Republic of China.³ This aspect of its history was almost certainly one further reason why the mosque survived the Cultural Revolution unscathed.

Tongxin has many other mosques, a thriving open air bazaar, a bookshop which sells the Qur'an, Islamic religious texts and devotional items including prayer mats, many *halal* restaurants, including one with modest facilities but excellent cuisine where the meal is preceded by the Hui custom, of washing the hands by pouring water over them from a jug, and an Arabic language school

3 HZJS p 76–7; *Dangdai Zhongguo de Ningxia* p 30; Personal observation Tongxin September 19, 1992; Zhong Kan, Chen Mingyou, Wu Zhongli (1988) p 384–394; Mian Weilin (1991) p 19–21; Qiu Yulan and Yu Zhensheng (1992) p 178–182.

which is producing interpreters and translators who will help to develop economic ties between the region and the Middle East. The men in Tongxin wear small white (or occasionally dark blue) hats and the women favour white headdresses which cover their hair and their shoulders. It is undoubtedly a Hui town, with few Han Chinese in sight, and an important Muslim centre in Ningxia, the Hui heartland of northwest China.

Ningxia has the greatest concentration of Hui people in all China, but there are other regions which are also predominantly Hui. The Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture in neighbouring Gansu province is one distinguished example. Linxia, known at the time as Hezhou, was the site of a bloody Hui insurrection against the Qing dynasty in 1862, and it is renowned today among other things for ornate and deadly Hezhou daggers. To the north of Urumqi, the capital of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, lies Changji, the administrative seat of the Changji Hui autonomous prefecture, a Hui enclave in a land of Uyghurs and other Turkic-speaking ethnic groups. Urumqi itself has a significant Hui population.

The city of Xi'an is usually associated with symbols of Han Chinese imperial power such as the Terracotta Army, the burial mound of Qin Shihuangdi - the first emperor of a unified China, and the tomb of emperor Tang Taizong and his consort. The city also has a Great Mosque, again dating back to the Yuan dynasty, thought of as dark, forbidding and ugly by some local Han Chinese,⁴ but supported by a Hui community in the Drum Tower quarter who have lived there for centuries. This mosque, also known as the Huajue Alley (*Huajue xiang* 华觉巷) mosque or the Great Eastern Mosque is one of the largest of the traditional mosques in China, occupying an area of 12,000 square meters. Building began in 1392 and it was refurbished during the Jiajing (1522–1566) and Wanli (1573–1620) reigns of the Ming dynasty and also in the early years of the Qing (1644–1911).⁵ There are many other smaller mosques in Xi'an but the Great Mosque has become something of a tourist attraction and foreigners, especially if they are Muslims, are often taken there.

The speciality at the *halal* Moon and Stars restaurant at 113 Beiyuanmen Road in Xi'an is *yangrou paomo*, 羊肉泡馍 a dish and a style of cooking which seems completely alien to the usual image of Chinese cuisine. Each customer is given a huge bowl and several

4 Interviews Shaanxi Academy of Social Sciences 1988.

5 Qiu Yulan and Yu Zhensheng (1992) p 168.

crisp flat breads similar to the nan of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Xinjiang. The accepted etiquette is to break the bread as finely as possible into the bowl which is then taken away and filled to the brim with a thick lamb broth. Hui people in Gansu favour *lamian* 拉面 (*laghman* to the Uyghurs and Kazkaks), thick broad noodles in a spicy beef stew, served in Linxia with a degree of courtesy and attentiveness rarely found in Han restaurants. Pork is of course absent, something that the majority of China's population find impossible to understand or to tolerate, pork and chicken being by far the most popular meats throughout China.

Outside northwestern China, there are few large towns or cities without a Hui community and there are many country areas with Hui villages. Hui Muslims can be found in large numbers in Shanghai, Guangzhou, the Fujian coastal towns of Changzhou and Quanzhou, and in rural Hunan. Yunnan has a distinctive Hui community dating back to the Ming dynasty's recovery of the territory after the disintegration of the Mongol empire. Travel to Kaifeng in Henan, better known as the home of the most famous synagogue and last surviving Jewish community in China, through Jiangsu or Anhui and even to China's porcelain capital of Jingdezhen and you will find a Hui community and a mosque.⁶

The best known Hui quarter of Beijing is the area around Ox Street (*Niujie* 牛街) in the south of the city, but there are at least sixty mosques in the capital. The best known is the Ox Street Mosque, *Niujie libaisi* 牛街礼拜寺 on Ox Street itself and the Dongsi in the northeast of the city centre is also important.⁷ In Shuangqiao, part of the Changying district of eastern Beijing there is a community of Hui farmers and stockbreeders. Shuangqiao has a mosque dating from the Ming dynasty which was restored during the Qing. The mosque survived the Cultural Revolution relatively unscathed and today attracts five hundred of the faithful for Friday prayers and as many as a hundred on other days.⁸ I met a sheep farmer in Shuangqiao whose son graduated from the Islamic Academy in Beijing and is now on the staff of the mosque. His wife serves as chair of the

6 Hu Zhenhua (1993) has a systematic account of Hui communities province by province.

7 Peng Nian (1990), p 15; Liu Dongsheng and Liu Shenglin (1990) is a study of the history of the Hui community in the Ox Street quarter of Beijing and the life of the community today.

8 Interview with Imam Nur al-din Qin Yuwen March 30 1991; *Shuangqiao*, leaflet produced by Beijing Association for Cultural Exchange with Foreign Countries.

neighbourhood committee and over tea we had a conversation about what they felt were the inherent difficulties in mixed marriages, a conversation which I could have had *mutatis mutandis* in Manchester or Cardiff or Leeds although in their case it was Han-Hui unions and not Catholic-Protestant or Welsh-Punjabi that were being discussed.

Although the Hui live throughout the whole of China, there is very little understanding among non-Hui citizens of China of who they are or why they consider themselves different from Han Chinese. Some Han Chinese are not even aware that the Hui consider themselves ethnically separate from the Han majority.⁹ The Hui are often known as the 'Chinese' Muslims to distinguish them from Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other Muslim communities who are clearly not Chinese by virtue of their distinct language and culture, and there is a myth or an assumption that they simply are Chinese who at some point in the past converted to Islam. The truth is far more interesting. In so far as it is possible to generalise about the origins of all the people in China who are classified as, or wish to be classified as, Hui, it seems likely that the origins of most of them are in the thousands of mainly Persian speaking Central Asian Muslims recruited or conscripted by the Mongol armies which took control of China in the thirteenth century. Although it has been argued that through intermarriage and living among the Han, they have to a greater or lesser extent become assimilated or acculturated into Chinese society over the centuries, the Hui have stubbornly retained their identity, their culture, their language and above all their religion.

This is a history of the Hui based primarily on their own accounts, in Chinese, of their origins and their experience of migrating to and settling in China. Unlike studies of the Mongols, Tibetans or the Uyghurs, there is no obvious alternative tradition in another language, apart that is from sources such as the *Secret History of the Mongols* and Juvaini's *History of the World Conqueror* in Persian which are invaluable for the Yuan or Mongol period. There is much mileage to be gained in contrasting Mongol, Tibetan and Uyghur language accounts of their history with the Chinese texts. For the Hui communities, there are certainly Arabic or Persian documents belonging to many mosques, but these tend to be devotional or mythical rather than historical and in any case many of them are guarded jealously by the leadership of the mosques as they have become symbols of

9 Interview April 1993.

religious authority rather than historical documents. For better or worse, the Hui went over to the use of the Chinese language for most practical purposes in their everyday lives during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) as a way of surviving in a predominantly Chinese-speaking environment and it is on the period from the Ming dynasty to the present day that this study concentrates. Elements of written and spoken Arabic and Persian have been retained by the community and are still drawn upon today by the Hui as a means of asserting their distinct Muslim identity, but the Chinese dialects of the area in which they lived became their main means of communication. In settling in China they lost some of their identity as Central Asians, although retaining a memory of their origins far to the west. They were not transformed into Chinese who happened to be Muslims, but evolved into a separate ethnic group, the Hui.

I hope that this study, in addition to telling the story of the evolution of Hui ethnicity, will also be a contribution to the history of China seen through a refracting lens. Histories of China tend to assume uniformity even if they do not claim it and there is also an assumption that China has become progressively more Chinese (in other words more Han Chinese) in its culture and that non-Chinese cultures have been assimilated or have died out. This notion of Sinicisation or Sinification has dominated Chinese attitudes towards ethnic minorities for centuries. I hope to show that, whatever the statistics suggest about Han preponderance and minority insignificance, to try to write the history of China as just the history of the Han gradually absorbing all the other ethnic groups is a serious distortion.

This is not intended primarily as a history of Islamic beliefs and practices in China although I hope it will make some contribution to that history. The main emphasis of the study is not the religion of the Hui, although, as will become clear, religion and community are inseparable. There have been a number of accounts of Islam in China.¹⁰ These tend to begin with the appearance of Muslim traders on the south east coast in the seventh or eight centuries AD, and imply a continuity of Islamic tradition from the Tang dynasty to the present day. Although these Arab and Persian traders were undoubtedly the earliest Muslims in China, their impact was local and limited. In terms of numbers and influence on most Hui

10 Broomhall (1910) and Leslie (1986) are two distinguished examples in English from very different times.

communities, the mass migration of Central Asian conscripts and traders during the Mongol empire was so much greater and it is on the period from the Mongol conquest of China onwards that this work concentrates.

Although a significant amount of primary material in Chinese, and from Persian and other languages in translation, has been consulted in the preparation of this book, it is essentially a work of synthesis and owes a great deal to the many earlier studies which have been cited. The *Note on Sources* that follows gives more information on some of the key sources used in this book. In spite of the valuable work done by scholars such as Donald Leslie¹¹, there is still many years' work to be done on the scattered and fragmented material relating to China's Muslims in the standard *Dynastic Histories*, the *Veritable Records* of successive dynasties and local histories, and in time a longer and perhaps better book may emerge from the study of these sources. There is also a considerable body of work on the literature and folk literature of the Hui, including the translations by Li and Luckert of stories from Hui mythology and folklore which would repay close comparison with regular historical documents.¹²

I am conscious of the fact that some readers may well possess considerable background knowledge of either Chinese or Islamic studies, although few are likely to be well versed in both traditions. Consequently, a certain amount of general material on both Chinese history and Islam has been included, even though some of this will clearly be superfluous for some readers.

The continuing existence of the Hui in China today is a testimony to the persistence and strength of ethnic sensibilities. Although Hui communities, for much of their history, have lived peacefully side by side with their Han or other neighbours, they have also been discriminated against and have been involved in violent confrontation with the Chinese authorities that have led to whole communities being transported or wiped out. During the great rebellions of the nineteenth century they could, with justification, fear genocide. At other times they have simply been ignored. The benefits to Hui people of the more tolerant attitudes towards religion and minorities encouraged by the Reform and Opening Up, *gaige kaifang* 改革开放,

11 See Note on Sources.

12 Li Shujiang and Karl W. Luckert *Mythology and Folklore of the Hui, a Muslim Chinese People*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1996.

policies introduced by Deng Xiaoping in 1979 are quite tangible. Mosques that were torn down during the Cultural Revolution of the nineteen sixties have been rebuilt. Hui officials have been promoted in the autonomous regions, prefectures and counties. Hui girls are once again being educated now that single sex schools are allowed. Religious or Islamic names which were hidden are appearing again on business cards. The academic study of Hui affairs has been given substantial support with the appearance of the scholarly journal *Huizu yanjiu* 回族研究 (Hui Studies) at the beginning of 1991. Hui people have found a new sense of pride in being Hui.

Anyone writing about ethnicity in the closing years of the twentieth century must do so with great trepidation. After the collapse of the flawed but multi-ethnic federations of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, the strength of ethnic awareness and the potential danger of ethnic conflict in the world after the end of the Cold War are self-evident. The internecine civil wars of Liberia, Burundi, Rwanda and Somalia are further evidence if more were needed. Students of Chinese history will be uncomfortably aware that there is no guarantee that China can escape the violence and horror of which inter-ethnic conflict is capable. It has happened so often before. The Hui do not need reminding: their own history provides enough examples of carnage and genocide. In putting forward this study it is not my intention to do anything to exacerbate differences between the Han and the Hui or between any ethnic groups in China and I can see no benefit to any communities in violent confrontation. However, I am convinced that ignoring ethnic differences, whether these are considered to be real or imaginary, is not the answer. The issue of ethnicity will not disappear.

A Note on Sources

Two slim one-volume studies of Hui history have been published in China since the Second World War, *Huihui minzu wenti* 回回民族问题 (HHMZWT) and *Huizu jianshi* 回族简史 (HZJS). Although there has been some controversy about their accuracy and reliability, partly because they were written under the supervision of the Chinese Communist Party and its united front organisations, they are the most serious attempts to produce a *longue durée* narrative of Hui history in Chinese in recent years and draw heavily on earlier scholarly academic studies such as those of Bai Shouyi. Both use

and quote from primary sources, although, infuriatingly, the *Huizu jianshi* does not identify the quotations it uses. I have used these books to help to construct a framework for the history of the Hui and in most cases other secondary sources and the primary sources support the historical analysis that they put forward.

I have also made extensive use of the work of Ma Tong, particularly in chapters 7, 8 and 9 which examine the Islamic sects of northwestern China, and I make no apology for this. Ma Tong's books are among the most remarkable written on the Hui and their religious practices in recent times. He takes a sceptical and secular approach while remaining sympathetic to his subjects, and his work is based on twenty years of fieldwork in Linxia and the surrounding area and draws on a profound knowledge of the Hui people and their history. There is no other source with such a wealth of detail on the history of the sects and their role in the daily lives of Hui Muslims.

Ma Tong's academic career began in the Law Department at North-West University in Xi'an, but he became interested in his Muslim neighbours and began to write articles on Chinese Islam in a journal called *Green Leaves* published by Muslim students at the university. He was sent to work in Linxia, the little Mecca of China's Gansu province, in the 1950s. He visited all the villages from which the multiplicity of Islamic sects and *menhuan* originated, interviewed as many of the elderly Imams and Sufi *shaykhs* as were fit and well enough to speak to him and made a record of their personal accounts of the histories of their mosques and *menhuan*. He also interviewed ordinary believers and collected large quantities of scriptures from the various sects and genealogical tables showing the hereditary succession of Imams and *shaykhs*. He was unable to publish the results of his research for decades because it was considered to be far too sensitive politically. During the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960s and early 1970s he was several times sent to work in remote villages where he was occupied with commercial matters completely unconnected with his academic interests. Nevertheless, he persisted in his research and this persistence was rewarded in the 1980s when the change of policy under Deng Xiaoping enabled him to publish the results of nearly thirty years' work. Far from being a secondary source in the conventional sense, Ma Tong's research is a record of fieldwork with, and the oral history of, the Hui in Gansu and Ningxia. His books deserve a full translation into English and I hope

that this will one day be possible, but, in the meantime, it is a privilege to be able to acknowledge my debt to his research.¹³ Much of Ma Tong's research is corroborated by Mian Weilin's more recent (1991) study of Islamic groups in Ningxia.

The work done by Donald Daniel Leslie in compiling and translating primary texts on Islam in China from a wide range of Chinese historical sources and published in his *Islam in Traditional China: a Short History to 1800* is invaluable to historians of the Hui, as are the translations from the Persian historians 'Ata-Malik Juvaini and Rashid Al-Din by John Andrew Boyle in *The History of the World Conqueror* and *Successors of Genghis Khan*. These are key primary sources on the Mongol conquest of China and Central Asia a process which was crucial in the historical evolution of the Hui people.

13 This brief account of Ma Tong's Career is taken from Gao Zhanfu (1991) p 396-371 and Ma Tong (1983) p 1-4. I am grateful to Dietmar Federlein of Erlangen University for drawing my attention to the short bibliography of Ma by Gao Zhanfu.

Ethnicity and Hui history

This study traces the history of the Muslim ethnic group known in China today as the Hui (*Huizu* 回族) as it has developed, changed and been recreated over the last eight hundred years of Chinese history. Economic and social organisation are considered as well as the religious activities that are the clearest indicators of Hui identity although these frequently overlap. A number of themes run through the study: the distinctiveness of Hui history or society in comparison with both the majority Han population and other Muslim ethnic groups; the role of Islam and other aspects of their tradition which define them as Hui; the continuity of Hui identity and its persistence for so many centuries in the face of pressure to conform to a pan-Chinese norm.

Official population statistics put the total Hui population of China at 7.22 million in 1982, making them one of the most significant of China's national minorities in terms of size. By the 1990 census there had been a substantial increase to 8,602,978, a rise of 19.04% over the eight years, which was nearly double the growth of the Han population in the same period. It is not clear whether this is a reflection of natural population increase or whether Hui people have been accepted as Hui more readily since the implementation of the post-Mao reform policies started by Deng Xiaoping in 1978. There are Hui communities in most counties and cities in China with significant concentrations in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, Gansu, Qinghai, Henan, Hebei, Shandong, Yunnan and the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.¹ There is a Hui population of almost 185,000 in Beijing itself and they are served by over sixty mosques, some of

1 Ma Yin (1989) p 95–108. 1990 Census figures from *Beijing Review* Volume 33 Number 52 December 24–30 1990, p 30.

them visited regularly by foreign Muslim diplomats and businessmen in China. The best known of these mosques is the Niujié or Ox Street Mosque which is the centre of the capital's Islamic life.² Shanghai has a well-established Hui community. Last but not least are the ancient Hui communities of southern China, notably Changzhou and Quanzhou in Fujian Province and Guangzhou (Canton).³

Because of their wide dispersion throughout China and the variety of Hui experience historically and in contemporary China, it is difficult to generalise about the Hui. The lives of Hui people in major cities such as Beijing, Xi'an, Guangzhou, Tianjin and Shanghai are very different from those of rural Hui living in the mountainous south of Ningxia or in Yunnan, and the Hui of the southern and southeastern port cities of Quanzhou and Guangzhou with traditions going back to the earliest history of Islam have a distinct tradition. Because of this diversity, the question of whether the Hui can realistically be considered as a single separate ethnic group or nationality has been raised, notably by Dru C. Gladney.⁴ Gladney has also drawn attention to a related problem, the identity of the Uyghurs, and is equally sceptical about treating them as a single ethnic group, arguing that the term Uyghur as it is presently used probably dates back only to Soviet advisers in Xinjiang in the 1930s.⁵ There is no evidence to suggest that the term Hui is similarly a recent revival, but studies under Communist Party auspices, beginning with *The Question of the Huizhu Nationality*⁶ first published in Yan'an in 1941 have reinforced the idea of the Hui as a single and separate ethnic group. Hui people are happy to identify themselves either as members of the Hui nationality, *Huizu* 回族 to use the classification favoured by the Communist Party, or as Hui people *Huimin* 回民.

The main emphasis of this study is on the Hui communities of northwestern China, that is the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, Gansu and Qinghai provinces and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. As its name suggests, the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region is the region with the greatest concentration of Hui people and it is

2 Peng Nian (1990); Liu Dongsheng, Liu Shenglin (1990), Hu Zhenhua (1993) p3.

3 For an outline of the Hui in Guangzhou, see Ma Jianzhao 'The Role of Islam in the Formation of the Culture and Economy of the Hui Community in Guangzhou' *JIMMA* Volume 16, Number 1, January 1966, p 31-39.

4 Gladney (1987), (1991).

5 Gladney (1990).

6 *Huizhu minzu wenti yanjiu hui* (ed) *Huizhu minzu wenti* Minzu chubanshe, Beijing 1982.

their nominal homeland in the People's Republic of China. Gansu, which also administered Ningxia before the Chinese Communist Party came to power in 1949, and Qinghai are multi-ethnic regions with a mixture of Han Chinese, Hui and Tibetans as well as smaller ethnic groups. Both include territory that was once part of greater Tibet. Xinjiang or Eastern Turkistan has a small majority of Muslim Uyghurs over Han settlers and Muslims of other Turkic and Persian speaking communities. It also has a significant Hui population which has played an important role in local history, often mediating between the Han and the other Muslim communities, and a nominal Hui Autonomous Prefecture, Changji, which is just to the north of the regional capital Urumqi.

The reason for concentrating on this area to the detriment of Hui communities in other parts of China is that, by virtue of their concentration in these areas, northwestern Hui have played a disproportionate role in the creation of Hui ethnic identity. The strength of Hui communities in that area has enabled them to retain their perception of their distinctive origins with a remarkable degree of success. To compensate for any possible imbalance caused by this emphasis, reference will also be made to Hui communities in Beijing, Hunan and Tianjin and to the southwestern frontier Hui of Yunnan province. This approach adopts a different perspective from some of the histories of Islam in China which have traced the emergence of the faith in China to its roots in the Arab and Persian traders who arrived on the south-eastern seaboard in the Tang dynasty. It is also consonant with Hui demography as the northwest has the most concentrated Hui population in China, and it coincides with trends in contemporary historiography of the Hui in China. The Hui of south China and the southeastern coast have not been neglected, but are not given the same emphasis here as in other studies.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is undoubtedly important, both to individuals and to communities. It serves to confirm a sense of identity, differentiating the self from the other. It is difficult to pin down exactly which factors contribute to ethnic identity, but language, religion, dress, custom and, above all else, the perception of a common blood line (however misplaced that perception might be) are involved. The concept of ethnicity is relatively new and is a replacement for older categories of

race, nationality and minority group which have been discredited or have been found inadequate to explain complex historical and social developments.⁷ Ethnicity or the awareness of ethnic identity is not always overt. It may lie dormant for long periods, to be reawakened in times of crisis. The collapse, or threat of collapse, of an existing social order tends to provoke a search for security, for identity, for community. Where no other bonds are available, bonds of ethnicity are extremely powerful.

The ethnic dimensions in Chinese history and Chinese society have always been there, but they have never attracted as much attention as in the twilight years of the twentieth century.

'Ethnicity', whatever one may mean by it, has emerged as a seminal issue in historical, sociological and cultural exchange. It has become a catch-phrase whose elasticity is in some ways welcome, in some ways to be regretted. . . . there is an irreconcilable incompatibility between sinological concepts (including 'sinicization') and contemporary ethnic studies . . .⁸

'The present predilection for identifying ethnicity as a phenomenon in China and using it as an analytical tool has evidently grown out of an awareness that the 'sinicization' (or 'sinification') commonplace received from previous 'generations of China scholars was conceptually flawed, intellectually inert and impossible to apply to real history. Sinicization was not merely a convenient word describing acculturation to Chinese culture or assimilation by it, but was a bundle of assumptions regarding the reasons for and the manifestations of cultural change throughout a very broad expanse of Asia. In itself, the idea of sinicization (*hanhua*) may someday be a suitable object for study and analysis. Its conceptual flaw lay in its circularity. To be 'sinicized' was to become 'like the Chinese', who were only those who had been previously sinicized.'⁹

These arguments are not merely abstract, theoretical or historical. During a seminar I gave at Ningxia University in Yinchuan in 1991, there was a ferocious and highly emotional argument about the extent to which the Hui had been subjected to a process of Hanisation (*hanhua* 汉化) or Chinesisation (*Zhongguohua* 中国化).

7 Glazer and Moynihan (1975) is a classic early exposition of the concept.

8 Pamela Kyle Crossley (1990) p 1.

9 Crossley (1990) p 2.

Since such discussions in China are normally bland and carefully orchestrated, this was an interesting and revealing exchange of views.

The two central arguments of Pamela Kyle Crossley's essay from which these passages are drawn are that 'there is an irreconcilable incompatibility between sinological concepts (including 'sinicisation') and contemporary ethnic studies, and that diachronic studies of 'race', ethnicity' and 'nationality' are particularly important.

'One speculates that the boundaries of ethnicity in China will be found to be more porous than has been previously suggested, but not less historically significant for that. The more such studies advance, it appears, the more rapid will be the deterioration of sinological conceits lingering in our professional language. Not a diminution, but a magnification of the significance of China study will likely result.'¹⁰

One of the most common terms applied to the Hui and their relationship with the rest of Chinese society is acculturation. In an article on the role played by religion in Muslim ethnicity in China, Mark Hudson has examined how religion has been used to express Muslim identity and how it determined Chinese attitudes to the Hui.

'For the Muslims, especially the Hui who became very outwardly acculturated to Chinese distinctiveness. The doctrinal core of this religious expression was, however, society, religion was the way in which they could most vigorously express their generally not understood by the Chinese. Han Chinese prejudices were conditioned more by cultural and racial factors than by religious ones.'

Hudson goes on to explore the idea of an 'ethnic boundary' and its maintenance by the manipulation and display of behavioural (including religious) or material symbols). Using the classic anthropological concepts of Great and Little Tradition as an analogy, Hudson argues that at the level of the Great Tradition acculturation to Han norms required outward conformity of language, dress and material culture, although there have been significant Hui deviations from this, notably the white or blue head caps for men and the veils for women. At Little Tradition level, however in 'the villages, Chinese religious beliefs were less abstract and were intimately

¹⁰ Crossley (1990) p 30.

connected with social institutions. Thus Muslim denial of filial piety (*xiao* 孝) and of the world of gods, ghosts and ancestors meant by definition that they were dangerous to the stability of the social order.'

Hudson argues that this made it difficult for Muslims in China to play a full part in the social life of the community but the historical evidence suggests that in fact they participated fully in their own communities and in the wider community when they were permitted to do so. There is no conflict between Islamic values and Chinese filial piety. As will be demonstrated, family and lineage connections and allegiance to the memory and teachings of preceding generations were crucial to the Sufi orders that proliferated in northwestern China.

He also points to evidence of conflict between the outward acculturation and inner faith. 'Each mosque, for example, had to contain Chinese Imperial Tablets, but when Muslims prostrated themselves before them they avoided touching the floor with their head and so invalidated the rite in their own minds.'¹¹ Surveying the history of the Hui people, it is difficult to see them as one, distinct, ethnic group, becoming acculturated to the Han Chinese majority. Individual Hui men and women followed a variety of paths through life. Some became religious professionals and lived their lives in mosques or Sufi orders, others entered for the imperial examinations and became officials of the Chinese imperial civil service and many able Hui men took the examinations for military officials and pursued careers in the army. The degree of integration into mainstream Chinese society varied from community to community and from individual to individual.

Ethnicity Self-assigned

Members of the Hui community, exploring and redefining their history, have frequently had to recreate that history for themselves. The official historiography of the Chinese empire did not attach much importance to the equitable treatment of ethnic minorities in the same way that it had little place for women (apart from chaste widows) or for peasants, merchants and craftsmen. It was essentially the history of the scholar and the official with the common people only making an appearance off-stage as tax payers. In the local histories or gazeteers (*fangzhi* 方志) there is information on ethnic

¹¹ Hudson (1987) p 156-160.

minority communities, but this is not usually referred to in the standard dynastic histories.

Ethnic identity is not of course simply inherited. For human beings, there is no genuine equivalent to the bloodstock book of horse breeders. Genealogies have been compiled to trace the lines of descent of important Hui families as they have in Han Chinese communities and in many other societies, but there is no certainty that these coincide with the actual breeding pattern because pride, shame and deceit may play a part in the reconstruction of family history.¹² The adoption of children to provide heirs for childless Sufi *shaykhs* was not unknown and in that case the children often took the names of their adoptive and saintly father.

Ethnicity is at least in part self-assigned. At times there are choices that individuals or communities can make as to their ethnic allegiance if not their ethnic identity. The number of communities in China now petitioning to be reclassified as Hui is evidence of the persistence of the possibility of choice into the present day. Communities which may have survived for many generations without the need to assert a separate ethnic identity may be forced to do so in a crisis. The apparent speed with which Serb, Croat and Bosnian Muslim ethnic identities emerged from what was assumed to be a stable pan-Yugoslav identity is the most obvious example. Traditions do not simply trickle down and condition people, they require constant attention, readjustment, reinforcement and reinvention. The inheritors of a tradition are as much a part of the creation of that tradition as those from whom they inherited it.¹³

A comparison with the Jewish community in Europe may be helpful. In 1938, a year in which European Jews desperately needed to reinforce their identity in any way possible. Cecil Roth published a book, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation* which at times strained credulity in attempting to find Jewish origins and Jewish connections for many of the great and the good of history, several of whom might have been rather surprised to find themselves so categorised.¹⁴ There is a similar enterprise underway in China today with the attempt to reconstruct a Hui history that has been eliminated from the official histories of China. A trawl through the dynastic histories and other sources has produced a list of names of possible and probable Hui

12 Liu Dong (1992).

13 Hobsbawm (1983).

14 Chaim Bermant *Independent on Sunday* July 25 1993.

and there is, of course, no opportunity for them to accept or deny their Hui identity. Perhaps the most extravagant and optimistic of these claims is that Zhu Yuanzhang, the founding Taizu emperor of the Ming dynasty, was a Hui.¹⁵ Future generations of Hui scholars are likely to modify the more absurd of these claims but for the present they are an assertion of the presence of Muslims and the important role played by them in Chinese history for centuries. Equally there are likely to have been people over the centuries who were entitled to identify themselves as Hui because of their family background, coming from the same mixed cultural background that produced the Hui but who chose not to do so and were content to be considered Han. There is no attempt in this study to claim that all the people in China who are classified as or who consider themselves to be Hui are precisely of the same ethnic origin. In many of the historical sources it is not at all clear whether the term Hui or Huihui refers to the ancestors of the people who consider themselves Hui in China today. At times the name Hui has been used simply to mean Muslim and is in that case a portmanteau term which could cover Uyghurs, Kazakhs and others.

The most important secondary sources for this study has been the collection of books and articles on Hui history and society that began to appear in China during the nineteen eighties. In the early years of the People's Republic, policies of relative tolerance towards religious and ethnic minorities contrasted with the indifference shown by the Guomindang Nationalist government in the 1930s and gained the Communist Party much support. Between the Great Leap Forward of 1958 and the death of Mao Zedong, the government led by the Communist Party had sought to minimise the significance of ethnic and religious differences for fear of conflict that could not be confined within, or explained, as class conflict. During the Cultural Revolution, ethnic and religious minorities suffered as Red Guards sought to eradicate all traces of the pre-Communist culture. For Muslims, the worst aspect of this was the destruction of their mosques. As part of the policy shift towards reform and opening that began under the aegis of Deng Xiaoping in 1978, attitudes to religion have become more broad-minded. Islam is tolerated and to some extent encouraged as a positive indication to the Muslim countries of the Middle East and Central Asia that China is a fit country to do business with.

¹⁵ See chapter three for discussion of this.

With this new acceptance of Islam came greater confidence, a renaissance of ethnic minority culture and a reassertion of ethnic identity for Muslim peoples in China including the Hui. As the designated homeland of the Hui people, the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region was given the responsibility of publishing books and journals on the Hui and on issues relating to Islam and many of the most important materials on the Hui have been produced by the Ningxia People's Publishing House in Yinchuan, although neighbouring Gansu Province which also has a significant Hui population has made major contributions and books on the Hui are published in the provincial capital Lanzhou. A significant development in 1991 was the creation of a quarterly academic journal devoted exclusively to Hui matters, *Huizu yanjiu* 回族研究 (*Hui Studies*), which is based in the Ningxia Academy of Social Sciences in Yinchuan. Much of this material could be criticised for having come from academic sources closely associated with the CCP, and publications from Ningxia in the years following the Cultural Revolution began with ritualistic invocations to Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy. These have now disappeared and, whatever its shortcomings, the body of work that has emerged from Yinchuan and Lanzhou has developed into a serious attempt to reevaluate the history of the Hui and their place in Chinese society today. Many books and articles from the northwest began as *neibu* 内部 (internal or classified) publications. Because of the sensitivity of the topic, they were initially restricted to party and government functionaries above a certain level, but since then, they have been published openly. Included in this group are the invaluable pioneering works by Ma Tong on the Sufi networks within Chinese Islam.¹⁶ Ironically there is now evidence that the reform policies which stimulated academic research on the Hui and other learned work are beginning to suffocate it. As China moves towards a market economy at a breathtaking pace, rampant commercialism is putting at risk academic research as the salaries of university teachers and researchers fall far behind their living requirements in an inflationary economy. Chinese scholars have expressed concern at what they see as a lowering of quality in academic work produced since the end of the nineteen eighties.¹⁷

16 See A Note on Sources. A copy of his 1983 study of the origins of Sufi orders, which I bought from a second-hand book stall on the streets of the predominantly Muslim town of Linxia in Gansu Province in September 1992 is inscribed *neibu* 内部 (internal, or restricted), but his 1986 follow-up was published openly.

17 Personal communications.

China and Islam before the Ming Dynasty

Contemporary scholarship in China emphasises the distinctive nature of Hui history after the Yuan dynasty, compared with the communities of Muslims who were in China from the Tang dynasty onwards. This is particularly true of scholars whose interest is in the Hui communities of northwestern China, but is more general now that responsibility for research and publishing on the Hui has been given to organisations such as the Ningxia Academy of Social Sciences in Yinchuan. It is nevertheless the case that the newcomers who arrived during the Mongol conquest of China gradually absorbed the smaller existing Muslim communities so a survey of the earliest Muslims in China is appropriate.

Contacts between China and the Middle East predate the revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad somewhere around the year 610 from which the rise of Islam is dated, and, as early as the Han dynasty, Chinese imperial expeditions reached the Arab world.¹ Indian Ocean shipping expanded between the fourth and sixth centuries AD with Chinese and Indian ships passing through the Persian Gulf and appearing inland on Arab rivers. There were Muslims in China from the earliest years of the foundation of Islam in the seventh century. These were mostly traders, described as Arabs or Persians, who came to the southeastern ports of Guangzhou,

1 Leslie, (1986) p 7-13 and passim, has extracted from the *Shiji* 世紀 and *Hou Hanshu* 后汉书, the two earliest dynastic histories of China, descriptions of Western Asia, particularly Persia and accounts of diplomatic, trade and tribute relations between China and its western neighbours. These accounts include information apparently derived from reports submitted to the Chinese emperor by his emissary Zhang Qian on his mission to the Yuezhi people of the Indus Valley in the 2nd century BC. See below in Chapter 10 *Language and the Hui* for more on the role of the Persian language in Yuan dynasty China.

Quanzhou and Changzhou as part of the Indian Ocean trade. The distinctions between Arabs and Persians are rather blurred because Chinese sources often do not distinguish clearly between the different linguistic or ethnic origins of the traders. The name Persian might be applied to anyone who had passed through the Persian Gulf as well as to people who genuinely came from Persia and as there were many Arab traders in the Gulf, there is frequent confusion. Not all the visitors were necessarily Muslims: some of those referred to as Persians at this time may have been Persian speaking Jews, Persian having been an important trading *lingua franca* at the time.

During the Tang dynasty (618–907), Muslims and other visitors from the Middle East in China, who were usually either visiting traders or residents in the ports of Guangzhou, Quanzhou, Hangzhou, Yangzhou and the imperial capital Chang'an, were part of the community known as *fanke* 番客 (foreign guests or guests from outlying regions). This was a mixed community whose religions included Mazdaism (Zoroastrianism and the Parsee faith), Nestorian Christianity and Manichaeism and Donald Leslie has drawn attention to the fact that Tang sources refer to these three but not to Islam.² The middle eastern visitors built temples and mosques and created cemeteries and were also identified by the name *Dashi* 大食, probably deriving from the Persian word Tajik which was generally used to describe Muslims who were neither Arab nor Turk, and were said to come from *Dashi guo* 大食国, the 'Kingdom of Dashi', which had its capital at Medina. In other words they were subjects of the 'Umayyad caliphate 661–750 or its successors the Abbasid caliphs who reigned from 750 till their capital Baghdad fell to the armies of the Mongol Hülegü Khan, brother of Emperor Khubilai, in 1258. The use of the term *Dashi* 大食, the Chinese characters for which mean literally 'Great Food' is imprecise and it is not entirely clear whether it meant predominantly Arab or predominantly Persian regions. In many cases it may have been used to indicate the Islamic world in general. It was used in China to refer to the homeland of Muslims from the Tang dynasty right through to the Mongol conquest of the thirteenth century.³ Muslim communities remained in existence in China throughout this period and the most important body of

2 Leslie 1986 p 17–19, 35.

3 '... the term [*Dashi*] does not refer specifically to Arabs and Arabia but to Islam and the Islamic Empire as a whole, including the Arabian conquests.' Bai Shouyi (1982) p 2–6; Yang Huaizhong 'Tangdai de fanke' in Gansu sheng minzu yanjiusuo 甘肃省民族研究所 (ed) *Yisilan jiao zai Zhongguo* 伊斯兰在中国 (1982).

evidence for this is the collection of gravestones with inscriptions in Arabic and Persian found in the Islamic graveyards of the port city of Quanzhou.⁴

Between the 3rd and 7th centuries, central and western Asia was dominated by the Sassanian dynasty of Persia. Trade and diplomacy with China flourished, both overland and across the Indian Ocean, and Chinese chronicles carried detailed accounts of the society and religion of the Sassanids and the collapse of their empire under the pressure of the Arab forces which brought Islam to the lands of Persia.⁵

The terms Hui or Huihui which later came to be the usual names for Muslims in China were rarely seen in Chinese historical records before the Mongol conquests, but there is a record in the History of the Khitan or Qidan Liao Dynasty, the *Liaoshi*. Yelü Dashi, the founder of the Western Liao dynasty, on his epic journey west 'sent a letter to the Uyghur king Bilege saying: Now I will [travel] west to Tajik (Dashi) and borrow a passage through your lands. I hope this will not cause suspicion. On receiving the letter, Bilege welcomed him to his official residence, held great banquets for three days and escorted him to the frontier. . . . Having crossed, they overcame their enemy and their army marched for ten thousand li . . . At Xunsigan (Samarkand) the king of the Huihui came to surrender.'⁶ The *Liaoshi* also lists a Huihui tribe (*huihui dashibu* 回回大食部) in its list of tribes encountered by Yelü Dashi on this expedition and it is clear from these sources that the tribes lived in the region of Samarkand. The Huihuiguo and Huihui Dashibu mentioned in the *Liaoshi* appear to refer to the eastern part of Persia and the Huihui king was the king of Khwarazm, the Khwarazm-shah, captured with his son at the battle of Samarkand.⁷ The influence of the Mongol

4 Chen Dasheng ed *Quanzhou Yisilanjiao shike* Fuzhou 1984.

5 Bausani 1971 p 48-70, 71-75; Leslie 1986 p 36 citing *Jiu Tangshu*.148

6 Tuotuo et al (ed) *Liaoshi: Tianzuo Huangdi benji*, (1974) p 356-357. See also Wittfogel and Feng (1949) p 619-674 and *Huihui minzu wenti* p 2. Some Chinese scholars also attribute the name Hui to the term used for Muslims living in present day Ningxia under the Tangut Xixia 西夏 dynasty which was wiped out by the Mongol conquests in 1227. See for example Yang Kaijian 'Guanyu "Huihui" zui zao chuxian yu xixi wenti de buzheng' (Supplementary evidence on the earliest appearance of the term Huihui) *Minzu yanjiu* (Nationality Studies) 1, 1993.

7 HHMZWT p 2. Dabry de Thiersant's (1878) pioneering study of Chinese Islam, quoting from Chinese sources which he does not identify, gives a similar account of the earliest mention of the name Huihui:

In the middle ages there was a Huihui kingdom whose name was mentioned for the first time in Chinese history in 1124, when Yelü Dashi, founder of the Western Liao dynasty, made his great expedition into the kingdoms of the west. When

conquests of this part of Central Asia on the formation of China's Hui community will be discussed later in this chapter.

Sources from Iranian history give a clear account of the domination of the Transoxanian region of eastern Iran by the Kara Khitai (Qarakhitai), in the 12th century. 'They did not exterminate ruling houses as the Mongols were to do, but were content to receive tribute and to exercise supreme overlordship'⁸ The invading group were one section of the Khitan pushed west by the rise of the Jurchen and its leader, Yelü Dashi, had himself declared Gur-Khan or supreme khan of the region. His regime is known as the Western Liao dynasty in the Chinese annals. He consolidated his position by defeating local Muslim forces at a great battle near Samarkand in 1141.⁹ This was the battle of the Qatwan steppe at which the Kara Khitai emperor inflicted a crushing defeat on the armies of Anjar, the last Turkish Saljuq sultan of Persia and which gave rise to the legend of an anti-Muslim crusading monarch, Prester John presumed to be Christian¹⁰. After the death of Sanjar, the Saljuk Turk empire fell into decline and collapsed in 1157, to be replaced by the Khwarazm-shah dynasty, a family appointed by the Saljuq sultan as provincial governors in the eleventh century, but now replacing them under the suzerainty of the Kara Khitai. The Khwarazm-shahs expanded as the Kara Khitai collapsed and by 1210 they had taken control of Transoxania and also occupied part of Afghanistan where they remained until it was attacked by Chinggis Khan in 1218.¹¹

Yelü Dashi arrived in Samarkand, he met with the army of the oriental kingdoms, comprising more than 100,000 men and commanded by the Gurkhan. The army of the Gurkhan was completely routed and the plain covered with dead to a distance of ten leagues. Yelü Dashi stayed for three months in Samarkand, where the king of the Huihui came to offer his surrender, and brought him, as tribute, sumptuous products of his country. It is therefore probable that the name Huihui was almost unknown in China before 1124. . . .

The king of the Huihui was Mohammed-Khotbeddin, surnamed Khouaresm-Shah, son of Tagash-Kahn, sixteenth sultan of the Khouaresmian dynasty, known to his subjects as Iskender Thani, or Alexander the Second. when he was attacked by Chinggis Khan, his kingdom consisted of Khouaresm, Transoxania which he had taken from the Kara Kitai Kourkan, part of Turkestan, Khorassan, Persian Iraq, the kingdom of Gaznah, Persian Caramanie, Mazanderan etc.'

8 C.E. Bosworth 'The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World (AD 1000 – 1217)' in J.A. Boyle (ed) *The Cambridge History of Iran Volume 5 The Saljuq and Mongol periods* Cambridge 1968, p 147.

9 Bosworth (1968) p 149.

10 David Morgan *The Mongols* (1986) p 48.

11 Morgan (1986), p 50–54, 67–9.

In the *Secret History of the Mongols*, written originally in Mongol in the Uyghur script by a Mongol officer, but extant only in a phonetic rendering of Mongol sounds by Chinese characters, Khwarezm, which Chinggis Khan had captured during the early rise of the Mongols is referred to as Huihuiguo, so it is reasonable to assume that Huihui is the Chinese translation of the name given to Persians and related peoples by Khitan and other north Chinese nationalities and that the most significant ancestors of the present day Hui were Persian speakers who moved into China. It is probable that *Huihui* is a direct translation of the Persian name for the Khwarezm/Khorezm region, although this is very difficult to substantiate. Hui people throughout China commonly describe their ancestors as having come from *Xiyu*, the Western regions. *Xiyu* is a somewhat imprecise term that in historical documents generally refers to Central or Inner Asia. It is used currently by people in northwestern China to mean both Xinjiang and former Soviet Central Asia.¹²

Khwarezm, also written Khorezm, [and not to be confused with Khurasan, which is also spelled Khorasan, and lies in what is now northeastern Iran, southern Turkmenistan, and northern Afghanistan] was the area to the east and south east of the Aral Sea, 'on both sides of the lower reaches of the Oxus (Amu Darya) and round the delta estuary'. It also includes an area between the Amu and Syr Darya and the southern section of the Ust Urt plateau, which is southwest of the Aral Sea and the territory is in present day Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The name was used both for the region and the main urban settlement also known as Gurganj or Urganch/Urgench, which, throughout much of its history, was an isolated oasis, accessible only to long-distance desert caravans. Juvaini describes it as 'the site of throne of the Sultans of the world and the dwelling place of the celebrities of mankind . . . its mansions were resplendent with every kind of lofty idea and its regions and districts were so many rose-gardens through the presence of men of quality, great shaikhs being assembled in one place with the Sultans of the age.'¹³ The indigenous Iranian population, speaking a local Khorezmian dialect, was incorporated into the Kushan empire in the first century A.D. and occupied by Arab invaders in the eighth century. By the time of its rise in the Seljuk dynasty, Khwarezm

12 Sun (1957) p 166-171.

13 Boyle p 123.

had become one of the greatest powers in the Muslim world.¹⁴ The traveller and writer, Yakut, who compiled a geographical dictionary and lived in Khwarezm from 1219–1220, considered it to have been one of the wealthiest towns he had ever seen.

'I don't think that anywhere in the world can be found larger countries than those of Khorezm and more populous in spite of the inhabitants being subject to a laborious life and a modest standard. Most settlements in [Khwarezm] are towns with markets of foods and with shops. You seldom find a village without a market-place. And all this while there is general security and undisturbed peace . . . There is hardly a town in the world comparable to the capital of [Khwarezm] for its riches and metropolitan grandeur, its number of inhabitants, and its proximity to wealth and fulfilment of religious aspirations and regulations.'¹⁵

It is from this environment that the predecessors of the Hui came. Although it would appear that in ethnic and linguistic terms they were primarily of Persian origin, the history of their home region is so complex that it is not surprising to find Arabic, and also Turkish influences in their language and customs. Arabic is there for obvious religious reasons, but the symbiosis of Persian and Turkish language and culture is an important feature of the culture of the region of Central Asia from which the Hui originated.

In an attempt to define the culture of this part of Central Asia, the anthropologist Robert Canfield has developed the concept of the Turco-Persian ecumeme¹⁶ or Turco-Persia, and describes the culture of the region as Turco-Persian Islamicate. The fundamental cultural roots are Persian, deriving from the Achaemenid and Sassanian empires. Both empires had their heartland in the southwestern part of present-day Iran, the Achaemenids in the fourth and fifth centuries BC and the Sassanians in the third to seventh centuries AD. The Arab conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries AD brought

14 Edgar Knobloch *Beyond the Oxus: Archaeology, Art and Architecture of Central Asia*, London, Benn, 1972 p 73–106.

15 Yakut cited in Knobloch (1972) p 93.

16 'The more appropriate term, I realized, was "ecumeme", a term used often by historians but rarely by anthropologists. "Ecumeme" suggests a historically perpetuated complex of meaningful forms – "world" (Greek: *oekumene*) of shared understandings – in which basic elements of public interaction are more or less well known.' Canfield (1991) p xiii.

Islam to the region and also the Arabic language. Arabic became an important part of Persian culture and had a profound influence on Persian, but was also changed by its contact with Persian. Iranian resistance to the Arab Umayyad caliphs led to their overthrow and replacement by the Abbasid caliphate under which there was something of a renaissance of Persian culture. The Abbasid caliphs gradually lost control of the eastern provinces of Iran and the Samanids who ruled Transoxania and Khurasan from 819 to 1004 were effectively an autonomous government.¹⁷

The independence of eastern Iran was marked by a cultural revival in which the New Persian language played an important role. Arabic had replaced Pahlavi or Middle Persian as the language of administration and literature after the Arab conquests, but the Samanids reintroduced Persian. 'The language that appeared under their patronage in the ninth and tenth centuries was a new form of Persian, based on the Middle Persian of pre-Islamic times but enriched by a copious Arabic vocabulary and written in the Arabic script.'¹⁸

The Turkish or Persianised Turkish influence in the region grew as Samanid power and their domains declined in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The Samanids were subverted from within their own political institutions as the Turkish former slaves took over from their masters. Turkish herders led by aristocrats moved into the pastures of northeastern Iran and as the Qarakhanids, ruling from 999–1140, they developed a distinctive Turkish culture in the region in parallel to the Persian and Arabic cultures that were already in existence.¹⁹

In the ninth and tenth centuries, one city emerged as the leading political and cultural centre of the eastern part of Iran. This city was Bukhara which epitomised the New Persian Renaissance. 'After 999, Bukhara turned its face from Baghdad to Kashgar and then to Qaraqorum [Karakorum]. It became part of the southern outpost of the Central Asian Turkish extension rather than part of the northern frontier of the Iranian-Islamic world.'²⁰

Although Bukhara has remained at least partly a Persian or Tajik speaking city right up to its present day existence as a city in predominantly Turkic Uzbekistan, the Turkification of the city can be traced back to the tenth century after which Persian and Turkish

17 Canfield (1991), p xi–xiv, 1–7.

18 Canfield (1991), p 6–7.

19 Canfield (1991) p 8–9.

20 Frye (1965) p vii–viii.

were both used. 'The Turkish language did not replace Persian, but the two existed side by side and many, perhaps a majority of the people, were bilingual, just as earlier many knew both Arabic and Persian.'²¹ On a contemporary footnote, the complicated linguistic condition of that part of Central Asia in the latter half of the twentieth century has been documented vividly by the Tartar poet, journalist, theatre producer and publisher, Marat Akchurin in his account of a journey through Central Asia just as ethnic tensions were beginning to spill over into the conflicts that caused the end of the Soviet Union. In addition to the mixture of Persian Tajik and Turkic Uzbek speakers in Samarkand and Bukhara, cities in the old Soviet (and supposedly Turkic) republic of Uzbekistan, Akchurin visited a community of Bukharian Jews in Samarkand who speak Tajik, but write it with the Hebrew alphabet just as European Jews began to write German in the Hebrew script, the language which was later to flower as Yiddish.²² This gives a flavour of the multi-faceted society from which the Hui emerged and to which they looked back when settled in China.

Migration Eastward from Central Asia during the Mongol Conquests

Central Asia came under the control of the armies of the Mongol leader Chinggis Khan, also known as Genghis Khan from the Turkish spelling of his name, after his invasion of the trading centres and oasis cities of Samarkand and Bukhara in 1219. Chinggis Khan issued orders that the craftsmen of the cities were to be spared in the slaughter that followed the conquests, because, for all their military prowess, the Mongols were keenly aware of their own lack of handicraft skills. The craftsmen who were spared were conscripted into the service of the conquerors and their first duties were usually the construction of fortifications in sieges during the campaigns to take their homelands. Both Central Asian and Chinese craftsmen were later pressed into service and taken to the Chinese heartland where they were used to build the capital at Karakorum. This practice was later continued by Khubilai Khan who used artisans

²¹ Frye (1965) p 185.

²² Marzat Akchurin *Red Odyssey: A Journey through the Soviet Republics*, London, 1992 p 355-363. See also Catherine Poujol 'Les Juifs boukhariotes' in Poujol and Gentell 1992 p 110-116.

conquests of this part of Central Asia on the formation of China's Hui community will be discussed later in this chapter.

Sources from Iranian history give a clear account of the domination of the Transoxanian region of eastern Iran by the Kara Khitai (Qarakhitai), in the 12th century. 'They did not exterminate ruling houses as the Mongols were to do, but were content to receive tribute and to exercise supreme overlordship'⁸ The invading group were one section of the Khitan pushed west by the rise of the Jurchen and its leader, Yelü Dashi, had himself declared Gur-Khan or supreme khan of the region. His regime is known as the Western Liao dynasty in the Chinese annals. He consolidated his position by defeating local Muslim forces at a great battle near Samarkand in 1141.⁹ This was the battle of the Qatwan steppe at which the Kara Khitai emperor inflicted a crushing defeat on the armies of Anjar, the last Turkish Saljuq sultan of Persia and which gave rise to the legend of an anti-Muslim crusading monarch, Prester John presumed to be Christian¹⁰. After the death of Sanjar, the Saljuk Turk empire fell into decline and collapsed in 1157, to be replaced by the Khwarazm-shah dynasty, a family appointed by the Saljuq sultan as provincial governors in the eleventh century, but now replacing them under the suzerainty of the Kara Khitai. The Khwarazm-shahs expanded as the Kara Khitai collapsed and by 1210 they had taken control of Transoxania and also occupied part of Afghanistan where they remained until it was attacked by Chinggis Khan in 1218.¹¹

Yelü Dashi arrived in Samarkand, he met with the army of the oriental kingdoms, comprising more than 100,000 men and commanded by the Gurkhan. The army of the Gurkhan was completely routed and the plain covered with dead to a distance of ten leagues. Yelü Dashi stayed for three months in Samarkand, where the king of the Huihui came to offer his surrender, and brought him, as tribute, sumptuous products of his country. It is therefore probable that the name Huihui was almost unknown in China before 1124. . . .

The king of the Huihui was Mohammed-Khotbeddin, surnamed Khouaresm-Shah, son of Tagash-Kahn, sixteenth sultan of the Khouaresmian dynasty, known to his subjects as Iskender Thani, or Alexander the Second. when he was attacked by Chinggis Khan, his kingdom consisted of Khouaresm, Transoxania which he had taken from the Kara Kitai Kourkan, part of Turkestan, Khorassan, Persian Iraq, the kingdom of Gaznah, Persian Caramanie, Mazanderan etc.'

8 C.E. Bosworth 'The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World (AD 1000 – 1217)' in J.A. Boyle (ed) *The Cambridge History of Iran Volume 5 The Saljuq and Mongol periods* Cambridge 1968, p 147.

9 Bosworth (1968) p 149.

10 David Morgan *The Mongols* (1986) p 48.

11 Morgan (1986), p 50–54, 67–9.

they were the founder members of many Hui communities. Even allowing for the exaggeration of a chronicler who was determined to leave a record of the depredations of the Mongol hordes and the rather loose use of numbers at the time, it is clear that large numbers of Central Asians were forced to move to China. The conscription of artisans is also recorded in the dynastic history of Mongol rule in China, the *Yuanshi*. 'Hasana, a Kerait, transported 3,000 Huihui artisans from Samarkand and Bukhara and other places and put them in Xunmalin [near Kalgan/Zhangjiakou] in the reign of Ogodei.'²⁶

The *Secret History of the Mongols*, written from a Mongol perspective, chronicles the capture of Gurganj and the subjugation of the Muslims, but does not mention the conscription of the artisans.

'Joshi, Cha'adai and Ogodei, those three sons of Chinggis Qahan, subjugated the city of Oruggenchi (Urgench): they shared the people of the city among all three of them, but did not give Chinggis Qahan a share.'²⁷

Central Asian craftsmen and others transported to China are almost always referred to as Muslims in the Chinese chronicles, where several different terms are used to describe them, including Huihui, *Musuluman* and *Dashiman* and the non-religious name *wotuo*, from the Turkic *ortaq* meaning trading partner. It is impossible to be absolutely certain how many of these were Muslims in the strict sense of the term, but this was a period during which the influence of Islam was expanding rapidly eastward as a result of the Mongol conquests. The official history of the Ming dynasty, chronicling its predecessor noted that 'In the Yuan period, the Hui-hui (from Samarkand) spread over the whole of China. By the Yuan dynasty the Muslims had extended to the four corners [of the country], all preserving their religion without change.'²⁸

Even after the fighting had subsided, the eastward migration continued. In addition to the craftsmen, others were pressed into service as soldiers, and women and children were taken as slaves as were some scholars and nobles. Although the Mongol conquest of China was at best a mixed blessing, it did re-open contacts between China and its western neighbours. Trade expanded and many

26 *Yuanshi* 122; Leslie (1986) p 79.

27 De Rachewilz (1984) p 98; Sun (1957) p 164-171.

28 *Mingshi* 332; Leslie (1986) p 79.

merchants travelled east from Central Asia, voluntarily in contrast to the earlier migrations. In Yuan official documents, all of the migrants from Central Asia to China were classified as one of the peoples known as *semu*, a term which is often translated as 'coloured eyes' or 'blue eyes' to indicate that these were westerners whose eyes were not uniformly dark like those of the Chinese, but the Chinese characters for *semu* 色目 can also be translated as 'special status'. The *semu* were one of the categories in which the Mongol conquerors placed their subjects. The highest status was naturally given to the Mongols, the *semu* were second, the Chinese *hanren* 汉人 were third and the lowest category was reserved for the Southerners *nanren* 南人. Some scholars have suggested that as many as two or three million conscripts from predominantly Muslim areas of Central Asia were used by the Mongols in their conquest of China, and twenty or thirty different kinds of *semu* may have come into China at this time.²⁹ These included the Persian speakers from Khwarezm and the predecessors of the Hui. The term *Dashi*, the most common term for Muslims in the Tang dynasty died out during the Mongol administration of China and Huihui or Hui became the normal name. However the meaning of Hui in the Yuan dynasty was not the same as today and usually meant Muslims in general rather than one particular group. The term Huihui has often been confused with similar sounding terms such as *Huihe* and *Weiwu* which denoted the ancestors of the present day Uyghurs of Xinjiang. During the Yuan period, the term *dashima* or *dashiman*, 答失曼, written using various Chinese characters was introduced. It is a borrowing from the Persian *danishmand*, learned scholarly or wise and is usually reserved for religious leaders, but sometimes means Muslims in general.³⁰

Some of the Muslim troops who had been ordered to move east were enlisted in the Mongol forces such as the multi-ethnic Tammaqi Army *tanmachii jun*, 探马赤军, the elite forward unit (sometimes translated as the Loyal Mounted Scouts), which served Khubilai Khan in his campaigns to subjugate China and undertook garrison duties in occupied territories. The Mongol aristocracy is said to have enjoined them to 'be prepared to fight on horseback, but when dismounted gather to raise and tend your herds'. In 1273, the tenth year of the Zhiyuan reign of the Yuan dynasty, the Scouts were ordered to demobilise and go to the countryside to farm. Although it

29 HHMZWT p 5 citing the *Xin Yuan shi shizu biao*.

30 Bai Shouyi (1982) p 21; Aryanpur-Kashani *Persian-English Dictionary*, Tehran 1979.

appears that this demobilisation did not take place immediately, it remained the policy of the Mongol regime, and many of these former soldiers settled in China and tilled the soil, often opening up new agricultural land. Some retained their military rôle and lived as settler-guards *tunshu* in the frontier regions. Both groups established their own communities and these were probably the origin of the segregated Hui villages. As well as their arable farming, the settlers raised cattle and sheep.³¹

The military origin of many of the Hui communities is reflected in the distribution of Hui villages. Rural Hui communities are clustered in the northwest and southwest of China and in that part of China proper which straddles the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River. The pattern of distribution corresponds with the routes taken by the Mongol armies as they took control of China. The main areas of Muslim settlement in the northwest stretched from the Liupan Mountains to the Yellow river in present day Ningxia and Hexi and Wutiaohu in Gansu, and contain many important examples of wilderness land reclaimed for agricultural use. Muslims also opened up new farming land in Shaanxi and in what is now Xinjiang.

In 1318, 'the *Daneshmand* had no food, so they were ordered by the emperor to go to Gansu province and given grain as relief.' In 1322, Hui settler-guards in Hexi were exempted from paying tax on the grounds of their poverty. In the Ningxia area, there is a tradition that Nasruddin (*Nasulading* in Chinese transcription), the son of the great Sayyid Al-Ajall Shams al-din Umar, had many children and grandchildren who were divided into families with the surnames of Na, Su, La and Ding and that this gave rise to the genealogies with these names and thus to villages with names like Najiahu (Na family household) in Ningxia and Lajiacun (La family village) in Chang'an. Ding is a common Hui surname to this day.³²

In Yunnan in the far southwest of China, many Muslims became involved in farming and opening new agricultural land after the conquest of the region by the forces of Khubilai Khan in 1253. The towns of Kunming and Dali were the main urban centres with large Muslim communities. Muslims, in conjunction with members of other ethnic groups in this multiethnic region, built dams and

31 Hsiao (1978) p 21; HZJS (1978) p 5-6. *Yuanshi* 98 describes in detail the complex process of conscription and demobilisation of troops of the Mongol empire.

32 HZJS (1978), p 6. *Danishmand*, the Persian original of *dashiman* means 'learned', but the Chinese translation may refer to either 'religious scholars' or simply 'Muslims'.

dredged rivers in what became known as the Six River Irrigation System (*liuhe guangai xitong*).³³ The movement of Central Asian Muslims into Yunnan is associated with the name of one man, the Muslim aristocrat Sayyid Ajall Shams ad-Din (?1210–1279), although, ironically he is celebrated for the sinicisation of Yunnan and its incorporation into the Chinese world. Sayyid Ajall was sent to govern Yunnan after serving his Mongol masters in various capacities in northern and central China. He built or rebuilt Confucian temples and re-established a Confucian education system, apparently seeing this as the way to ensure social stability and integration, rather than pursuing an Islamic policy. He is however also credited with the building of at least two mosques, but his influence on the growth of the Muslim community in Yunnan was indirect.³⁴

Further east in China proper, Muslim military settlements were established in the Henan and Shandong regions. In 1281, Hui artillerymen were ordered to set up a military colony in the Kaifeng area of Hunan. There were also many Muslim settlements in the Jiangnan region, the area immediately south of the Yangzi river which was to become so important for the spectacular economic growth that China experienced during the Ming dynasty. Many of the Muslims who went to Yunnan with Mu Ying at the beginning of the Ming dynasty were drawn from the Jiangnan communities which, during the Yuan, included units of the Tammachi army and Muslim farming families.³⁵ As Muslims spread throughout Yuan China, it was craftsmen or artisans who were most prominent after the conscripted troops. Many of the more than 30,000 craftsmen captured by Chinggis Khan's forces in the 1220 Samarkand campaign, were specialists in delicate work who were enlisted in the official government crafts bureau, the *guanju*. This might include producing Central Asian style brocades or silks or the manufacture of cannons. All the artisans brought to China by the Mongols were pressed into the official quasi-military system under which the Yuan dyansty employed craftsmen and were not permitted to operate privately.³⁶

33 HZJS p 7.

34 *Yuanshi* 125 p 3063–3070; Jianping Wang *Concord and Conflict: the Hui Communities of Yunnan Society in a Historical Perspective*, Lund 1996, p 70–3; Rashid Al-Din, translated by J.A. Boyle *Successors of Genghis Khan* 1971, p 287–8; Leslie (1986) p 80.

35 HZJS p 7.

36 HZJS (1978) p 7; Chu Ching-yuan 'Govenment Artisans of the Yuan Dynasty' in E-tu Zen Sun and John De Francis *Chinese Social history: translations of selected studies*

As the Mongol empire grew, all classes entered into its service and the diffusion of Islam throughout China is evident from the number of by mosques dating from that period. By the Yuan dynasty there were already mosques in Yanjing (Beijing), Helin, Guangzhou, Quanzhou, Hangzhou, Xi'an and Kunming. Inscriptions on tablets in mosques in Songjiang, Dingzhou and Dali confirm their Yuan origins.³⁷ Many Muslim nobles, officials, scholars and traders came to do business in China following the invading Mongol forces. The number of Muslim traders coming to China then was unprecedented. Much of the Yuan dynasty's income from 'statutory offerings' and customs tax depended on Muslim merchants and they occupied an important position in foreign trade. The Mongol rule of China provided favourable conditions for the Muslim merchants to develop their businesses, in particular the close relationship between Muslim merchants and ruling Mongol nobles, 'Mongols and Huihui merchants established commercial relations at an early stage. In the time of Yuan Taizu, Chingis Khan (1209-1229), one of the Mongol capitals, Helin, had a Muslim street market where the traders lived and worked.' The political status of Muslims during the Yuan dynasty was higher than that of the Han as the Mongols classified the population into Mongols, Semu, Han and Southerners in descending hierarchical order and there were fewer legal restrictions on trade for the Muslims than for Han or southerners. Muslims had preferential treatment in imperial examinations, official appointments, punishment and possession of weapons and horses. Individual Muslims also had real power in central court and local government which helped the official-trader relationships.³⁸ However, this did not always mean that they could practice their religion openly and without hindrance. Although Chinggis Khan had issued instructions urging tolerance of all religions, he had also forbidden the ritual *halal* slaughter of animals for food in a renowned *yasa*, the Mongol legal pronouncement, and his successors were more or less lenient. The emperor Chaghatai, for example, was so strict that Muslims had to wash and slaughter sheep in secret. '... he enacted minute *yasas* that were an intolerable imposition on such as the Taziks, eg that none might slaughter meat in the Moslem fashion nor sit by day in running

p 234-246, New York 1972; Chan, Albert *The Glory and Fall of the Ming Dynasty* University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1982 p 79.

37 Chan (1982) p 117. Bai Shouyi (1982) p 23.

38 Lai Cunli *Huizu shangye shi* Beijing, Zhongguo shangye chubanshe, 1988 p 97-8.

water, and so on. The *yasa* forbidding the slaughter of sheep in the lawful manner he sent to every land; and for a time no man slaughtered sheep openly in Khorasan, and Moslems were forced to eat carrion.³⁹

Some Chinese sources have argued that Muslims in China during the Yuan dynasty had a common language and lifestyle. Most of the people referred to as Muslim or Hui in the Yuan dynasty were probably of eastern Persian origin but there was also a mixture of speakers of Turkic languages, including the ancestors of the present day Uyghurs of Xinjiang. There was almost certainly no single common language. Persian probably predominated but the group referred to as Muslims by the Yuan court included members of different ethnic groups speaking different languages, and may indeed have included Jews and Uyghurs.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, influential Chinese commentators consider that there were major differences between them and the Muslims in China during the Tang and Song dynasties. Muslims who came from overseas in the Tang and Song did not consider themselves to be Chinese, whereas not long after they had settled in China, Yuan dynasty Muslims were already considering themselves to be Chinese citizens. Before the Yuan dynasty Muslims, who were mainly merchants, could travel throughout China on business, but were restricted in where they could live. During the Tang dynasty they were allowed to reside in Guangzhou and Yangzhou, under the Song in Guangzhou, Hangzhou and Quanzhou. There were no such restrictions under the Mongols and Muslims were able to spread throughout the empire.⁴¹ Hui culture as it appears today, especially in northwestern China has its origins in this period of conquest and migration.

Yuan dynasty policies towards Muslims allowed them to play a significant role in the political and economic administration of China. The ethnic divisions of Yuan dynasty China were formalised by the court. Apart from Mongols, the entire population was classified as *Hanren* (northern Chinese, Jurchen and Khitan, *Nanren* (Chinese from the south) and *Semuren* (which included all Muslims and other non-Chinese groups). The position that Muslims occupied was in many ways an uncomfortable one of intermediary between the Han Chinese subject peoples and the Mongol conquerors. To the Chinese

39 Juvaini/Boyle (1958) p 272.

40 See Rossabi (1981) p 259.

41 Bai Shouyi *Zhongguo Yisilan shi cunqao* Yinchuan, (1982) p 8-10, 209.

their work as as tax collectors, money-lenders and traders made them appear as oppressors, whereas their Mongol lords in spite of a policy of toleration of all religions nevertheless restricted the activities of the Muslims, particularly their religious practices.

'By serving as intermediaries between the Mongol rulers and their Chinese subjects, the Muslims performed valuable services but simultaneously provoked the wrath of the conquerors and the conquered . . . the Mongols, consciously or not, used the Muslims as scapegoats, thereby diverting Chinese animosity from themselves. Like the European and Middle Eastern Jews of modern times, a large number of muslims were involved in trade and finance. By employing the Muslims as tax collectors and moneylenders, the Mongols ensured that the Chinese and the Muslims would frequently be at odds.'

The Mongol classification of Muslims as one group of the *semu* may obscure the real differences in the Muslim population. It is not clear whether the people who eventually became the Hui were drawn from more than one social group or whether one class or occupation was dominant. Neither is it apparent whether ethnic or linguistic divisions among the Muslims were more important in determining the development of the Hui. Because of the crude classification, the differences between Uyghurs, Muslims and Jews are often very unclear.⁴² Most Muslims who moved into China were probably unattached men who married local women when they settled down and the Hui tradition of intermarriage with Han Chinese, Tibetans and others, which can be traced back to the Tang dynasty, strengthened the Muslim community under the Mongols.

42 Rossabi (1981) p 257-295.

Settling in China: The Hui during the Ming Dynasty

The Ming ruling house (1368–1644) is viewed by many Chinese historians as one of the greatest dynasties in China's history. This is because it apparently marked the re-emergence of Chinese cultural supremacy after a period of almost a century under Mongol rule. It is, therefore, usually designated as a Chinese dynasty in contrast to the Mongol Yuan dynasty that preceded it and the Manchu Qing that followed, which are both labelled as foreign conquest dynasties. For the nation as a whole, the reality was far more complicated than this, and the history of all three of the dynasties is the history of other ethnic groups as well as that of the majority Han. In the history of Muslim communities in China, the Ming dynasty was a crucial turning point. During the Ming dynasty Muslims gradually became an ethnic minority permanently settled in China rather than an immigrant community looking towards Central Asia as their homeland. In Donald Leslie's words, they 'changed from being "Muslims in China" to "Chinese Muslims"'.¹ Muslim communities continued to spread throughout the country as they had during the Yuan, and it is possible to detect during this period the emergence of a distinctive culture, a culture that was not just a transfer of Persian or Central Asian culture and yet was distinct from Han Chinese culture. From this time onwards it is possible to speak of a group of Muslim Chinese with common bonds who can be called the Hui.

During the Ming dynasty, the Hui population of Shaanxi and Gansu, already large, increased substantially. There were major Hui settlements in Qingyang and Pingliang in Gansu and in Xi'an,

1 Leslie (1986) p 105.

Yan'an, Fengxiang and Hanzhong among other areas of Shaanxi. From the very early years of the Ming dynasty, there were many Hui sent to areas such as Guyuan in present day Ningxia (which was previously part of Gansu province) and these areas later became important Hui settlements. They were all major trading centres as they were situated in the area where traders on the Silk Route first entered China. There is strong evidence from the *Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty* that a significant number of the envoys and merchants who came from Central Asia into present day Gansu and Ningxia failed to return and settled in China. This process continued well in to the fifteenth century.² Yunnan, which is in the far southwest of China and is today on the border with Vietnam, also became an important focus for Hui migration. Hui people were dispersed around China, mostly in areas where they were greatly outnumbered by the Han population, but they countered this by establishing Hui villages, often heavily defended behind stockades, or in the towns and cities, Hui streets, wherever they settled.

Ming Taizu: the First Ming Emperor

After the collapse of the Mongol empire some Muslims continued to support Mongol rule while others threw in their lot with Zhu Yuanzhang and the Ming dynasty he proclaimed in 1368. It is not clear how they divided and whether class, region or individual loyalty played a major part in their decisions. The attitude of the new emperor, Zhu Yuanzhang, whose posthumous name was Ming Taizu and whose reign title was Hongwu, towards Muslims is interesting. There is evidence that he discriminated against a Muslim lineage, the Pu and prohibited them from taking part in the official examinations because their ancestor Pu Shoukeng, a Song dynasty customs superintendent in Quanzhou had surrendered to the Mongols and caused the deaths of Song aristocrats, but he also employed eleven Muslim astronomers in 1369 to reform the calendar,³ and issued an edict on September 23rd 1368 that 'Mongols and *Semuren* who were talented and able were to be chosen for official employment.'⁴

2 Lin and He (1992) p 192-204; HZJS (1978) p 13.

3 Chan (1982) p 117-8.

4 Taylor, Romeyn *Basic Annals of Ming T'ai-tsu*, Chinese Materials Centre, San Francisco, 1975, p 61.

One writer, an ethnic Hui from Taiwan, has pointed to the relative freedom enjoyed by Muslims during the Ming dynasty and turned to the background of the emperor in an attempt to find an explanation.

'Zhu Yuanzhang – Ming Taizu – was a descendant of a Semu officer in the Mongol Tammachi Garrison force in Anhui . . . It was the expectation of the Han Chinese that the Hui who had collaborated with the Mongols to build the Yuan dynasty would be persecuted. However, they were instead given religious, political, economic and social freedoms by the Ming emperor. Several hundreds of thousands of them were in the Ming military service and many of their leaders were appointed to high military and civil posts. It was the emperors policy to protect the Muslims by having them completely sinoized (*sic*) and to dilute the hatred of the Han Chinese who had been harshly treated by the Mongols and the Semus. For this reason the Emperor forced Muslims to attend Chinese schools, to speak the Chinese language, to wear Chinese clothes, to adopt Chinese names and to marry Chinese spouses. One more important factor that points to the Islamic identity of the Ming ruler was that Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang's queen, Ma Hou, was a Muslim and that some of their sons and daughters married Muslims. Under this favourable political climate, the Hui minority lived in peace, prosperity and happiness for a period of 276 years. The fact that Ming Taizu was a Muslim was kept a highly guarded secret in Ming history, undiscovered by any Chinese historian or scholar during the last six centuries.'⁵

Characterising Ming Taizu as a Hui is regarded as at best eccentric by the majority of scholars in mainland China although it is a view shared by Ma Mingdao, a Turcologist in Taiwan. There has also been a debate about whether Taizu's wife was really a Muslim. It would have been prudent for Taizu to employ able Muslims to counter or bypass potential conflicts within the imperial household. So this cannot be taken as evidence that he had Muslim connections. Ming Taizu was probably not a Muslim and indeed when he was a teenager, he spent some years in a Buddhist monastery.⁶ But the fact

5 Chang, *Haji Yusuf 'The Hui (Muslim) Minority in China: an Historical Overview' Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* 1987 8/1 p 62–78. The evidence cited for Ming Taizu's Hui origins include Chang's family tree; Wu Han *Ming Taizu* 1949 p 96; Jin Jitang *Zhongguo Huijiaoshi yanjiu* Taipei 1971 p 153.

6 Wu Han *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan*; Hucker (1978) p 15–16.

that a debate of this nature is even possible indicates the complexity of the multi-ethnic makeup of Yuan and early Ming society. It is possible that Ming Taizu came from a background that included Muslim Central Asian ancestors, but he is not generally considered to be part of the Hui tradition.

The Establishment of Hui Communities during the Ming Dynasty

Whatever the ethnic origins of Ming Taizu, the Ming dynasty was an important period for the Hui community whose status gradually changed from outsiders to insiders. It was also a period of a process which has been described as acculturation to Han Chinese norms or Sinicisation. The Hui communities that flourished during the Ming dynasty did change. Some were probably assimilated completely and lost their Muslim identities. The majority of those who subsequently became the Hui of the twentieth century adopted, at least outwardly, a style of life similar to that of their Han neighbours. Many Muslims had changed their names from a Persian, Turkish or Arabic form to a Chinese one, a practice that had already begun in the Yuan dynasty.⁷ For example, descendents of one Boyanchaer living in Beijing's sheep market area changed their surname to Yang (written with the character for sheep 羊), changing it again to Yang (written with the character for the poplar tree 杨, which is of course a common Han surname) on moving to Shandong.⁸ As intermarriage brought non Hui (Han, Mongol and Uygur people) into the community, the cultural identity of the Hui came under threat. Ming Taizu had issued an edict that Mongols and *semu* in China should marry Han rather than other Hui. The motivation behind this edict was probably to dissipate the power that the Muslims had acquired by assimilating them and integrating them into Chinese society in general. The effect was precisely the opposite. It is not clear how universally the edict was obeyed, but intermarriage became common, the children of these marriages usually remained Muslims and the Hui population increased as a

7 Bai Shouyi (General Editor) *Huizu renwu zhi* Yuan and Ming volumes, Yinchuan 1985, 1988; Ch'en Yuan (translated and annotated by Ch'ien Hsing-hai and L. Crrington Goodrich) *Western and Central Asians in China under the Mongols: their transformation into Chinese*, Monumenta Serica Monograph XV, University of California, Los Angeles, 1966 p 226-241.

8 *HZJS* p 14.

result. Most incomers were Han wives of Hui men, but Han men marrying Hui women could also become Hui. This dilution of the original community had the effect of reducing the influence of the Persian and Arabic languages, as Chinese became the normal medium of communication. As early as 1536, there were complaints that Hui people could no longer understand the Qur'an in Arabic. It was during the Ming dynasty that major Islamic texts, including the influential books on religious observance and doctrine by Wang Daiyu, were first written in Chinese as will be shown later in this chapter.⁹

Although the Hui became integrated into Ming society, it is not accurate to speak of this as acculturation or the complete assimilation by the Hui of Han Chinese cultural characteristics. The relationship between the Hui and the culture of their Han neighbours varied considerably from region to region. In some areas of eastern and southeastern China, there was significant assimilation. In other areas, particularly the northwest, rigid distinctions were maintained and the Hui consciousness of their difference and separateness was preserved. During the Yuan dynasty, Muslims in China had been divided by language and custom into different groups of *semu*. By the end of the Ming dynasty, they had merged into a more cohesive community, Muslim by faith but primarily using the Chinese language.

Mu Ying

The spread of Muslims throughout China during the early years of the Ming was in large part a consequence of the campaigns mounted by Ming Taizu and his military commanders to establish control over the territory previously under Mongol rule. Several of these campaigns, including the one that finally brought Yunnan, into the Chinese empire were associated with Mu Ying.

Mu Ying (1345–1392) was born in Dingyuan in Anhui and was orphaned when he was only seven years old.¹⁰ He was adopted by Zhu Yuanzhang along with other boys who had lost their parents and grew up with the name Zhu Wenying. Contemporary accounts suggest that he was not aware that Zhu Yuanzhang was not his real

⁹ Wang Daiyu *Zhengjiao zhenquan; Qingzhen daxue; Xizheng zhenda*, Yinchuan, 1988.

¹⁰ Goodrich, L.C. and Chaoying Fang. *Dictionary of Ming Biography* New York: Columbia University Press, 1976, p 1079–1083 henceforth DMB.

father and it is known that Wenying lived with and was educated with the future Ming Taizu's natural son Zhu Biao. At an early age he showed considerable military prowess and was assigned to command the garrison at Jinjiang while still under twenty years of age and distinguished himself in battle in the key campaign against Chen Yuding, Yuan loyalist head of the provincial government and effective dictator of the coastal province of Fujian in the final years of the Mongol Yuan dynasty in 1368. Legend has it that at this point Zhu Yuanzhang revealed to all his adopted sons that he was not their natural father and ordered them to revert to their original names. Mu Ying served his adoptive father on garrison duties in Fujian and then in the new Ming capital of Nanjing. In 1377, he was appointed deputy to Deng Yu, one of Zhu's military commanders, in a campaign which extended as far as present-day Qinghai and western Sichuan to punish a Tibetan ruler who had refused to acknowledge Ming authority. Deng Yu died on the return journey and Mu Ying was rewarded with the title of Marquis (*hou*) and an annual stipend of 2,500 piculs of rice.¹¹

In November 1378, Mu Ying was sent on a second expedition to the northwest to put down unrest among groups of non-Chinese people unwilling to accept Ming control, which became known as the revolt of 'Barbarian Chieftains' of the eighteen ethnic groups. He achieved an important military victory near Taozhou (now known as Lintan) in southwestern Gansu and established a permanent garrison there, bringing this border region of mixed Chinese and Tibetan settlement under firm Ming control for the first time. Since the Tang dynasty, what subsequently became known as the Old Town of Taozhou had been an important market town specialising in border trade between Chinese on the one hand and Tibetans and Qiang to the west on the other. This trade, including the familiar tea and horse trade of the western borders made the town wealthy and although it was isolated it was able to achieve a certain level of educational and cultural development. Mu Ying's expeditionary force included many Muslims and the garrison town that was established to the east of the old city grew into the New Town of Taozhou/Lintan. The New Town became the administrative centre and nominal economic and cultural centre, but in practice the Old Town remained more important. According to local historical records, 'the old Taozhou mosque was in the Old City and was rebuilt in the *dingwei* year of Ming Hongwu.'

¹¹ DMB p 1079.

This poses a problem since there is no *dingwei* year in the Hongwu reign and the nearest is in the reign of the Xuande emperor, that is the year that corresponds to 1427 in the western calendar. The likelihood is that the original mosque was built in the *jiwei* year, 1379, shortly after the arrival of Mu Ying's Western Expedition and that either the local history has confused the year code or that it refers to a rebuilding much later. Whatever the case, Taozhou/Lintan developed into an important bulwark of Islam in western China and in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries became a major centre for an unusual Muslim sect, the *Xidaotang*, sometimes translated as the Hall of the Western Way.¹²

There is no suggestion in most western accounts of Mu Ying's career or the Chinese sources on which they draw that Mu Ying was anything other than a Han Chinese by origin, yet he has been included in the major series of studies of the lives of eminent Hui as a Muslim without any comment. The surname Mu is also common among Chinese Muslims and is probably derived from Muhammad, although it is normally written with a different Chinese character 穆. The character 沐 used to write Mu Ying's surname is the one associated with washing the hair and which appears on signs in every mosque in China as the first character of *muyu* 沐浴 the ritual baths to be used before prayer. The old mosque of Taozhou was built on an expedition under Mu Ying's command, suggesting that at least he was not antagonistic to Islam and he is certainly regarded by twentieth century Hui people as part of their tradition and indeed Yunnanese Hui families regard him as an ancestor.¹³ He was probably descended from an old Muslim family but there is no evidence that he was a practising Muslim.

Mu Ying and the Pacification of Yunnan

Yunnan, the most southwesterly region of China remained outside the control of the Ming emperor in the 1370s. Inhabited mainly by various non-Han Chinese ethnic groups speaking languages of the Tibeto-Burman family it was ruled from his capital Kunming by the Mongol prince Basalawarmi (d.1382) who remained loyal to the

12 Ma Tong (1983) p 155–6; *Taozhou ting zhi* cited in Ma Tong (1983) p 156. For details of the Hall of the Western Way, see Chapter 9.

13 Bai Shouyi (editor in chief) *Huizu renwu zhi (Mingdai)* p 20–25; Jianping Wang (1996) p 77–8.

idea of a Yuan empire. A diplomatic mission by Wang Wei (1323–1374) sent by the emperor to agree terms for the peaceful annexation of the territory failed in 1374 and Wang was murdered. In 1381, Mu Ying and Lan Yu were appointed deputies to the commander Fu Yude on a major expedition to incorporate Yunnan into the Ming state and led the attack on Kunming. The attack was successful, Kunming was captured and Basalawarmi committed suicide on January 6, 1382. The Ming forces also eliminated the Dali power-base of the Duan family who had been influential since the Song dynasty and had been used by the Mongols because of the network of connections they had established among the non-Chinese tribes such as the Shan and Lolo. Fu Yude and Lan Yu were recalled to Nanjing in April 1383 but Mu Ying remained to oversee the creation of a civil administration. To give him the necessary authority, he was designated hereditary military governor and consequently head of a military administration that ran parallel with the civilian government. The Ming government in Nanjing also ordered the promotion of all officers serving under Mu Ying in Yunnan and gave them hereditary ranks, transforming the expeditionary force into a permanent garrison.¹⁴ Hui settlements followed this colonisation and gradually spread throughout the mountainous region west of Kunming and bordering on Burma. The majority settled in rural areas with only a small proportion in the towns.¹⁵

Yunnan, like other provinces in southwestern China during the Ming dynasty was governed by a mixed administration. There was the combination of provincial, prefectural and district officials that were the norm throughout the rest of China. The network of local hereditary chieftains (*tusi*) was retained under Ming authority as an extra layer of control over the indigenous people. In addition, there were pacification offices (*xuanweisi*) which were customary in most ethnic minority regions. Parallel to these civilian structures, the Mu family estates and its military force ensured that Yunnan remained under Ming control as it was the Mu clan which had 'virtually created Yunnan as a Ming province and made it an integral part of Han Chinese civilisation'.

Mu's power and prestige declined in the Chongzhen reign period (1628–1644), the last of Ming rule. Corruption and the ambition of

14 DMB 1079–1081.

15 HZJS p 13.

officials and officers led to dissension and to a revolt led by the pacification commissioner Sha Dingzhou who seized Yunnanfu (Kunming) in 1646 and attempted to remove the hereditary governor, Mu Tianbo, descendant of Mu Ying, and take his place. The revolt was suppressed only when Sun Kewang, a former rebel was invited by a high ranking non-Chinese military officer to enter Yunnan, ostensibly to restore Ming control. Sun obtained the cooperation of Mu Tianbo and the revolt was crushed by Sun's associate Li Dingguo late in 1648. Yunnan was in chaos as the Ming dynasty finally gave way to the Qing. The displaced Ming emperor, whose reign was styled Yongli, fled to Burma with his court in 1658.¹⁶

Hunan

Many present day Hui communities trace their origins back to a Ming ancestor, including those of Hunan and Tianjin. In Hunan the origin of the Hui community is traditionally dated to the first year of the Hongwu reign, 1368, when large numbers of Huihui soldiers and officers came into Hunan with the military, many of them settling in the area, although there may also have been Muslims with detachments of troops loyal to the first Ming emperor which arrived in the area as early as 1365. Later, with the development of commerce, some Hui traders moved from the southeastern coast and the market towns of the lower Yangzi and entered Hunan via the Dongting lake and the rivers of Xiang, Zi, Yuan and Li. Of the Huihui who entered Hunan with the military, most came from Nanjing and Beijing and settled in the strategic towns of Shaoyang and Changde which later became the major centres of Hui settlement in Hunan.¹⁷

Tianjin

The most important Hui settlement in Tianjin is Tianmu, a Hui village in the northern suburbs of the city, on the western side of the Beijing – Tianjin road. Out of a total village population of 20,400 in 1990, some 14,500 were Hui. According to local traditions, the founding

16 On Mu Ying's pacification of Yunnan, see also Jianping Wang (1996) p 53–5.

17 Ma Liangsheng (chief editor) *Hunan Huizu* (The Hui Nationality of Hunan) Hunan sheng minzu shiwu weiyuanhui (Hunan Provincial Nationality Affairs Committee) Hunan renmin chubanshe 1988 p 1–2; *HZJS* p 14; Hu Zhenhua (1993) p 415–426.

father was Mu Chonghe, a bodyguard of the Ming emperor Zhu Di. Mu was sent there in 1404 with troops ordered to wipe out bandits and settled there. His descendants built a hamlet Mujiashuang which was merged with Tianqimiao in 1951 to form Tianmu. Over the centuries Hui and Han have intermarried, and even those who identify themselves as Hans do not eat pork and are known as 'accustomed Huis' (*xiguan Hui* 习惯回). Of the two mosques in Tianjin, the northern is the earliest, dating from the Yongle reign of the Ming dynasty (1403–1425), whereas the southern was not built until 1854. Evidence from the chronicles of the Yuan dynasty suggests that there were Muslim troops and traders in the city even earlier than the Ming period.¹⁸

Nanjing as a Centre of Islamic Thought

In the early years of the Ming dynasty, Nanjing, the political headquarters of the founding emperor, Taizu, and his first capital, was a vibrant and cosmopolitan city. As early as 1423, there were more than twelve hundred foreign envoys and traders in the city. The diplomats were all housed in the Bureau of Translation *Huitongguan* in Tongjimennei and their retainers in Wumanyi. Most of the traders lodged outside the walled town on the banks of the Yangzi in the Longjiang or Jiangdong post stations. The Imperial College (*Guozidian*) had a multi-ethnic student body. Among the large number of foreigners in Nanjing were many Central Asian Muslims: the population of the city in the Hongwu reign was approaching 500,000 and as many as ten or twenty per cent were Muslims, with ahongs alone accounting for up to a hundred. Many of the Muslim troops who had followed Mu Ying to Yunnan were originally based in the Jiangnan area.

One of the Muslims who came to Nanjing at this time was an ancestor of the most significant Muslim theologian of the Ming dynasty, Wang Daiyu. The man, whose name is not recorded, was persuaded to become an official at the Huihui Imperial Board of Astronomy (*Huihui qintianjian* 回回钦天监), with permission to reside in the capital and exemption from all corvée taxes.¹⁹ The Board was originally set up in 1368 alongside the official *sitianjian* so that there

18 Hu Zhenhua (1993) p 206–224; Lu Yun 'Tianmu – a Muslim Village' *Beijing Review* Volume 33 Number 28 July 9–15 1990 p 21–24

19 Yu Zhengui Wang Daiyu (1986) p 2–3.

were two parallel astronomical organisations.²⁰ The Huihui Board was based on the Yuan dynasty organisation set up after Jamal ul-din (Zhamaluding) had brought the Yuan court new Arab astronomical techniques and instruments.²¹ The Ming dynasty continued this tradition and Wang Daiyu's ancestor is reputed to have been responsible for calculating the Muslim calendar used at the Ming court.

Wang Daiyu was probably born in about 1585 into this ancient and distinguished astronomical family. The only evidence for this is in the preface that Wang wrote to his book *Zhengjiao zhenquan* 正教真詮 (*A True Commentary on the Orthodox Faith* – that is Islam) under the soubriquet *Zhen Hui Laoren* 真回老人 'True Muslim Elder'. From this preface it is clear that he was about fifty or sixty years old at the time that it was written and, since it was published in about 1642, his date of birth was almost certainly between 1582 and 1592. His Islamic education began early, probably under the influence of Ma Junshi, a native of Nanjing and fourth generation disciple of the Shaanxi Qur'anic scholar, Hu Dengzhou.²²

Hu Dengzhou (1522–1597), known to his followers as Grand Master (*taishi*) Hu, played a decisive role in the development of Islamic education in China. He established a Quranic school in Weinan in Shaanxi which started from very small beginnings with the recruitment of a few Hui children and courses based on the Qur'an, the hadiths and Islamic jurisprudence. The curriculum evolved into a sophisticated fourteen course system, with eight of the courses in Arabic and the remaining six using Persian texts. Mastery of Arabic and Persian was a prerequisite of entry to the school. Hu Dengzhou trained a small cadre of disciples who took religious education to Hui communities throughout China, including Ma Junshi who brought his teachings to Nanjing.²³ Wang Daiyu, as the pupil of Ma Junshi, was the fifth generation disciple of Hu Dengzhou.

Cosmopolitan Nanjing was an important centre of Islamic teaching in the sixteenth century, and noted scholars included Yuan Ruqi, the teacher of the distinguished thinker Liu Zhi and Liu's father, Liu Sanjie. In this setting, Wang developed a system of Islamic thought influenced significantly by Confucian ideas and terminology and by

20 Yu Zhengui (1986) p 4, citing *Mingshi* juan 31, Calendar 1.

21 Yu Zhengui (1986) p 4, citing *Yuanshi* 90, Hundred officials 6.

22 Yu Zhengui (1986) p 9–10. On Wang Daiyu, see also Bai Shouyi (1982) p 34–35.

23 Yu Zhengui (1986) p 10.

Buddhism.²⁴ At first, many of Wang's ideas were unacceptable because of the unwillingness of Muslims to allow other faiths or philosophies to influence their thinking, but the arrival of Sufism, the mystical tradition of Islam, in China helped him to break through these restrictions. Sufism had become influential in India during the sixteenth century and was transmitted to Hui communities in the interior of China through Turkestan. A Hui scholar who was a contemporary of Wang Daiyu, Zhang Zhong from Suzhou who was born about 1584, received instruction from an Indian Sufi master, Ashgar, in Nanjing, and although there is no direct evidence that Wang did the same, there is evidence of Sufi influence in his writing.²⁵

According to Hui tradition, Wang began to write his systematic introduction to Islam for both Muslims and non-Muslims, the *Zhengjiao zhenquan* (*A True Commentary on the Orthodox Faith*) after friends complained that there was almost nothing available in Chinese about Islam. Writing this pioneering work involved Wang in many technical philosophical and linguistic problems, in particular the need to translate concepts of Islamic philosophy into Chinese forms that would be both acceptable and understandable. Wang drew on the techniques of translators who had wrestled with the same problems with the scriptures of other religions, especially the translators of Buddhist texts who had centuries of experience of creating Chinese equivalents for Sanskrit and Pali terms. Christian writings, translated and circulated by the Jesuits, among others, were also circulating widely in China at that time and their translators had been faced with problems similar to those with which Wang was wrestling.²⁶ Wang Daiyu, unlike his teacher Hu Dengzhou, appears to have come to the conclusion that Muslims in China could no longer rely on original texts in Arabic and Persian as the basis for their religious and philosophic ideas, and this realisation that they needed Islamic texts in Chinese is a clear indication of the changes that had taken place in Hui society during the Ming dynasty and the decline of proficiency in written Arabic and Persian. For many Hui people, this was another symbol of the new position of the Hui as insiders rather than outsiders in China.

Wang Daiyu's Hui identity is not in doubt because of his clear religious background, but the same cannot be said for many other

24 Yu Zhengui (1986) p 10–11.

25 Yu Zhengui (1986) p 15; Aubin (1990).

26 Yu Zhengui (1986) p 14–16.

individuals who are assumed or claimed to have been Hui during the Ming dynasty. Part of the problem is the degree of assimilation of the Hui into Ming society, in particular the transformation of their names into forms that were closer to Han names. Hui people often, but by no means always, retained distinctive surnames, but there are many cases where scholars are uncertain whether to accept the conventional presumption that an individual genuinely was of Hui origin. Research has been done into genealogies and folk tradition, but these are often felt to be unreliable.²⁷ Equally, Chinese historical biography in general only records the lives of those individuals who fitted the role models of Confucian society. There are copious records of the lives of officials, of examination successes and chaste widows, but few of farmers, traders and craftsmen, and very few of members of the ethnic minorities unless they became loyal servants of the Chinese state. The case of the Hui is no exception and it is extremely difficult to discover anything about the lives of the majority of the Hui, who were peasant farmers and traders, during the Ming dynasty.

The Hui Community of Yangzhou

Hui communities settled in many places along the Grand Canal from Hangzhou to Tongxian, many of them dating back to the Yuan period, but some had moved there in the reign of Ming Chengzu, the Yongle period of 1403–1424. From this line of settlements, the Hui moved west into Kaifeng and Luoyang in Henan, and as far west as Shaanxi, reinforcing the Hui communities already there.²⁸

The city of Yangzhou, on the Grand Canal just north of its exit from the Yangzi river, was probably one of the earliest inland cities to have been visited by Muslim merchants after they had made landfall in Quanzhou or Changzhou on the Fujian coast in the seventh century during the Tang dynasty. The first mosque in the city was apparently built in 1275 at Taiping Bridge North (now known as Nanmen dajie) by the Central Asian Muslim, Buhaoding (also written Puhading), who claimed descent from the prophet Muhammed, and arrived in Yangzhou some time between 1265 and 1274. Puhading was buried within the grounds of the mosques and an Arab missionary, Sagana, who came to the city to preach in 1278 was later buried near his

²⁷ Bai Shouyi *Huizu renwu zhi: Mingdai*, preface.

²⁸ *HZJS* p 13.

tomb. Excavations in 1924 when a tower was demolished revealed gravestones in the city walls with inscriptions in Arabic and Persian recording the deaths of people from the middle east and including Persian place names. One tablet recorded the death in 1374 of the wife of a man called Eryishenhatong (Eryisaihatong), whose father, Lezunding (Leizunding) appears to have been a prominent Muslim official in Yangzhou at the time. Yangzhou was the site of heavy fighting at the end of the Yuan dynasty and the carnage when Zhu Yuanzhang's armies finally took the city was such that there were said to be only eighteen families left.²⁹

With the more enlightened policies of Ming Taizu towards Muslims and their new legal status, missionaries began to travel to Yangzhou to renew the faith. The earliest recorded is Mili hazhi (Milli haji) in 1407, who may have been a key link between the Muslims of the Silk Route, the Central Asians who came to China over land and the Muslims of the Spice Route, the Arab and Persian traders. Arab missionaries who followed Mili hazhi included Mahamode (Muhammad) in 1464, Zhanmaluding (Jamal ul-din) in 1469 and Fana and others in 1498, all of whom were buried in the Muslim graveyard in the Huihui tang in Yangzhou. Apart from these graves there is also a *gongbei* tomb dedicated to a Muslim merchant Wang Jian from Chang'an county, Xi'an who was buried there in 1501 and the graves of officials and other Muslims who were not clerics. The mosque was rebuilt twice during the Ming dynasty, first in 1380 by a man known only by his name, Hasan, and later in 1523 by a merchant Ma Zonghe and the Ming buildings are still in existence. After the end of the Ming dynasty, the Manchu policy of isolation cut off the Hui community in Yangzhou from the Middle East and there are no records or traditions of further missionary visits or other contact with the Arab world.³⁰

Yangzhou rose to prominence during the Qing dynasty that followed the collapse of the Ming. It became the centre of the lucrative salt trade and the home of a merchant culture, which rivalled the 'floating world' of Edo in Tokugawa period Japan but was reviled by Confucian scholars as lavish and wasteful. By the eighteenth century, when Yangzhou was at its most prosperous, the

29 Zhu Jiang 'Zhongguo Yisilanjiao wenhua dongjian Yangzhou shiwei' in Gansu sheng minzu yanjiusuo 甘肃省民族研究所 (ed) *Yisilan jiao zai Zhongguo* 伊斯兰在中国 (Islam in China) Xibei wu sheng (qu) Yisilan jiao xueshu taolun hui (Lanzhou Huiyi) lunwen xuanpian Ningxia (1982) p 24-41.

30 Zhu Jiang (1982) p 32-35.

influence of Islam and western Asiatic culture appears to have waned, but it is tempting to suggest that the middle eastern origins of part of the city's merchant population may have been one of the reasons for both its commercial success and its distinctive culture.³¹

31 Ping-ti Ho 'The Salt Merchants of Yang-chow: a Study of Commercial Capitalism in Eighteenth Century China' *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* Vol XVII (1954) p 130-168; Yu Zhenhua (1993) p 282-296.

Hui Communities under Manchu Rule

In most historical accounts of the Manchu or Qing dynasty (1644–1911), the Hui are usually defined only in terms of conflicts with their Manchu rulers, including the rebellions of the early Qing, the major and well documented risings of the eighteen-sixties¹ and the less well documented ones of 1895 when China was more preoccupied with its first major conflict with an Asian nation powerful enough to challenge its supremacy in the region – the 1894–5 war with Japan. For the nineteenth century in particular, the term rebellion or rising that is usually used is quite misleading as it suggests a concerted and united struggle by the Hui against the Manchu Qing government. Part of the violence was certainly directed against the Qing rulers, but it was also partly a result of internal conflict within the Hui community. There were labyrinthine disputes between factional religious groups within the Hui communities as well as conflict between the Hui and the Han and between the Hui and other Muslim communities in China. As far as the turmoil of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is concerned, the interactions and clashes between groups on the basis of ethnicity, class and affiliation to sect or *menhuan* are complex indeed and are best understood as outbreaks of widespread intercommunal violence similar to those which devastated the Indian sub-continent in 1947–8 during the period of independence and partition.

1 See especially: Chu, Wen-djang *The Moslem Rebellion in Northwest China 1862–1878: a study of government minority policy* The Hague, Mouton 1966, and Joseph Fletcher's chapters on Inner Asia in Twitchett, Denis and John K. Fairbank (ed) *The Cambridge History of China* Volume 10, Part I, Cambridge 1988.

Muslims in the Ming-Qing Transition

In the chaos that accompanied the disintegration of the authority of the Ming dynasty in the 1630s and 1640s, numerous groups of bandit-rebels roamed China. One group, led by Li Zicheng, plundered much of northern China before entering the gates of Beijing in April 1644, taking control of the capital and bringing to an end the dynasty that had ruled China since 1368.

Li Zicheng had surrendered to Ming forces under the command of Chen Qiyu in 1634 and was escorted back to northern Shaanxi but his troops moved south in 1635, occupied several cities in Shaanxi and Henan and was in the process of establishing a shadow government by 1643. In Xi'an in 1644, he proclaimed himself emperor of a new dynasty, the Shun. His troops occupied Beijing on April 25 1644 and the last Ming emperor hanged himself on Jingshan, a hill, sometimes known as Coal Hill, just to the north of the imperial palace complex and overlooking it. Li's triumph was short-lived and on June 6 the armies of the Manchus, originally a nomadic people from the northeastern frontiers of China who had developed agriculture and had close contact with Chinese culture, entered the capital and began another dynasty of conquest, the Qing.²

In 1638 Li Zicheng in flight after his defeat sought sanctuary with Lao Huihui, a Muslim insurgent, whose soubriquet translates simply as 'Old Muslim' and left with enhanced forces. The Qing rulers had to suppress a number of uprisings in which Chinese Muslims had the support of their co-religionists in Central Asia. Muslims often joined Chinese rebel groups rather than form separate units, so identification of rebel groups as Islamic is difficult. 'some were Han Chinese and some were not Chinese, but the sources do not distinguish between them.' According to Rossabi, there are few sources and Chinese and Persian histories rarely refer to relations between China and Central Asia in this period.³

When the Qing armies, fighting to establish their control throughout China reached Shaanxi in the northwest and parts of southeastern China such as Yangzhou where the war was fought most fiercely, the Hui population, as well as the Han, was involved in the resistance. There were also Hui people involved in the loyalist southern Ming regime. When Prince Gui, Zhu Yu'ai, fled from the

2 For the history of the Manchu people and their conquest of China, see Crossley, Pamela Kyle *The Manchus* Blackwell, Oxford 1997

3 Rossabi (1979) p 170-171.

fighting, a group of Hui who had fled with him were trapped in the Tengchong and Baoshan area in the west of Yunnan near the border with Burma and adopted the surname Ming to symbolise their loyalty and unwillingness to surrender to the Qing. Zhu Yu'ai and his father had been forced to abandon their estates when the rebel army of Zhang Xianzhong moved into the south of Huguang in 1643. Zhu Yu'ai's father died in 1644 and he, himself died not long after being invested as Prince of Gui.⁴ In Guangzhou three senior Hui officers lost their lives in the resistance to the Qing earning them the soubriquet 'three defenders of the faith' *jiaomen sanzhang* (literally the three Muslim loyalists).

In Shaanxi and Gansu there was sporadic resistance to the Qing conquest, the largest scale rising taking place in Gansu in 1648 and 1649 under two Huis, Mi Layin and Ding Guodong whose rebellion in Gansu in the name of the Ming lasted for two years.⁵ Mi Layin had been a senior military official in Ganzhou and in March 1648 he ambushed and killed the Provincial Governor, Zhang Wenheng and occupied Ganzhou. He then marched south at the head of an army of a hundred thousand and attacked Liangzhou (Wuwei), Lanzhou, Hezhou (Linxia), Minzhou (Minxian) and other important cities causing shock waves to spread right through to Shaanxi and Shanxi. The Qing court responded by sending a force under Governor General Meng Qiaofang who put down the rising and had Mi Layin and Prince Yanchang, Zhu Shiquan, killed in Liangzhou. In August the Qing forces attacked Ganzhou and Ding Guodong withdrew to Baosu and Jiuquan in northwest Gansu where he continued his resistance. At the same time another Hui known by his *nom de guerre* of 'Rush to Smash Heaven' *chuangtian* raised an armed force and occupied Didao (Lintao) in southwestern Gansu and a Han, Jiang Rang, captured Datong and Puzhou (Yongji) in Shanxi. But by 1649, the Qing armies had broken the back of the resistance and Ding Guodong and other leaders were killed.⁶

Although the Hui were heavily defeated by the Qing armies they may in the long run have benefited from the improvement of the economy as Qing rule stabilised and policies such as tax commutation and the abolition of crafts registers were introduced. As the

4 HZJS p 21.

5 HZJS p 21.

6 *Shizu shunzhi huangdi shilu juan* 43 p 8 in Ma Saibei (1988); HZJS p 21-22; Wu Wanshan (1991) p 3-19.

Qing dynasty progressed, the Hui appear to have become re-integrated into the socio-economic life of China, but the sense of difference and the antipathy to Qing rule remained and were to resurface.

In 1781, Bi Yuan the governor of Shaanxi outlined the position of the Hui population in the province in his positive memorial to the Qianlong emperor:

'It appears that in various places in Shaanxi province, the Huihui are more populous than in other provinces. Moreover in Xi'an and the counties which belong to it, Chang'an, Weinan, Lintou, Gaoling and Xianyang and Dali and Huazhou which belong to Tongzhou Nanzheng and other prefectures and counties belonging to Hanzhong, the Hui people build stockades in which they live and there the Hui population is even denser. The Hui population of the provincial capital Xi'an is at least several thousand and there are seven mosques in the city. The majority of Hui in Xi'an live by farming, livestock rearing and trade. Many are comfortably off and have served as military officials, officers of high or low rank and successfully taken the military examinations.'⁷

Within a few decades there were Hui villages on both banks of the Hui river in Shaanxi. In eastern Gansu, 'the thousand li from Ningxia to Pingliang is all Hui villages.' From Tianshui to Qin'an, Tongwei, Weiyuan, Lintao, Linxia, and as far west as Xining (Qinghai) and also in Zhangyi and Jiuquan in northwestern Gansu where it borders on Xinjiang there were concentrations of Hui people. In these parts of northwestern China as in Shaanxi, the Hui made their living from arable farming, animal husbandry and trade. Hui agricultural production was generally at about the same level as their Han neighbours. In the Ningxia area, Han and Hui labour jointly built or rebuilt irrigation channels. The Daqing, Qixing, Changrun and Huinong canals were all cut during the Qing dynasty, and the famous Tanglai and Hanyan canals were also reconstructed or extended during this period. In Gansu and Qinghai, Hui and Han farmers opened up new agricultural land.⁸

⁷ *Qin zhezong* (Equitable Settlement in Shaanxi) Leslie (1986) p 127; also cited in HZJS p 22.

⁸ HZJS p 22-23.

Mosque Education and Religious Professionals

Although the Hui, like their Han neighbours, were farmers and traders, they retained their sense of identity and separateness through their religion. This religious identity and sense of separateness was reinforced by the system of mosque education which the Hui developed and it was further encouraged by the influence of Sufism which spread into China during the seventeenth century.

Islamic education in China was originally carried out in Arabic, Persian and possibly some of the Turkic languages. There are no records of this in Chinese for the Yuan and early Ming dynasty as all information could be transmitted in Arabic and Persian, and all textbooks used those languages. It was only with the decline in the ability of the Muslims to use Arabic and Persian that Islamic education through the medium of Chinese became necessary. Hui scholars in the twentieth century, drawing on Chinese sources to reconstruct their history have not usually looked back to the early stage when Arabic and Persian textbooks were used. The Xinjiang Provincial Museum in Urumqi has a fine example of the Qur'an dating from the Ming dynasty with annotations only in Arabic and Persian, but in areas more under the influence of Chinese culture than Xinjiang, providing commentaries and other devotional material in Chinese, which was becoming the language used by the vast majority of Muslims on an everyday basis, was vital for keeping alive their religion and culture.

By the middle of the Ming dynasty Muslims were only just able to keep the doctrines and the faith alive through the translation of the Arabic scriptures into Chinese. The technique developed by Hu Dengzhou (1522–1597) of training successors to the Ahong at the expense of the parish was tried out first in Shaanxi and later spread throughout the Muslim community in the whole of China, to Nanjing and Wang Daiyu as has been seen, but it was transmitted later to the northwest, flourishing in the Lintao and Hezhou areas of southwestern Gansu and in Qinghai and Ningxia. There have been several centres of Islamic learning in China over the centuries, from communities of immigrant Arab and Persian scholars on the southeast coast in pre-Yuan times, to the area around Xi'an in late Ming and early Qing and then to the isolated region of southeastern Gansu in the middle years of the Qing dynasty.

In Lintao and Hezhou, a three-level system of mosque education evolved. Primary age children learned simple Arabic phrases

necessary for prayer, and the essential rituals of prayer and ablution. The secondary and tertiary curriculum was based on texts in Arabic and Persian, including grammars, a primer of rhetoric, explanatory notes on the Qur'an, philosophical texts and the Qur'an with Persian annotations. Members of Sufi orders also read Sufi philosophical texts.⁹ Muslim education in different areas had different emphases: for example Shandong became known as a centre for the study of Persian texts.

As the Muslim population grew by natural multiplication and intermarriage, chiefly of Hui men to Han, Tibetan and other women, and as the community became more prosperous, the Hui felt the need for more religious education. The scale of mosque building in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is a good indication of the increasing prosperity and size of the Hui community. In addition to pious motives, this was also a means of asserting the identity of the community. Education allowed the development of a class of religious professionals and this in turn led to the proliferation of scriptural interpretations and schools of thought. Scholarly Ahongs attracted greater salaries than the less well educated and conflict to attract funds from the Muslim population was a factor in the development of sects and religious orders. By the time that Sufism made its appearance in China's inner Asian frontier neighbours, Lintao and Hezhou in southwestern Gansu were already important seats of Islamic learning. The Qing dynasty was beginning to relax its closed door policy, Chinese and foreign Muslims were in contact across the border and southwestern Gansu became a major centre for the development of Sufi orders.¹⁰

Muslims in southern China, during the late Ming and early Qing, lived closely alongside their Han neighbours. The Hui community constantly attempted to resist assimilation but did not retain its identity as distinctly and separately as the Hui in the northwest. The strength of religious belief was fading and the response of Muslim intellectuals was to return to the translation movement that had been pioneered by Wang Daiyu, both to provide texts for Muslims and information on Islam for the the Han elite in an attempt to convince them that Islam was not inferior to Confucianism.¹¹

9 Pang Shiqian on *madrasas* in Bai Shouyi (1982) p 370-374.

10 Ma Tong (1983) p 112-113.

11 Ma Tong (1983) p 114.

Another influential Muslim scholar and successor to Wang Daiyu, Liu Zhi, was born in Nanjing in the early part of the Qing reign of Kangxi. His father, San Jie, also known as Han Ying had published studies of the Islamic scriptures and Liu Zhi followed in his footsteps. Liu's best known works were translations from the Islamic canon and included *Tianfang xingli* 天方性理 (*Islamic Philosophy*), *Tianfang dianli* 天方典礼 (*Islamic Ritual*) and *Tianfang zhisheng shilu* 天方至圣实录 (*The Last Prophet of Islam*).¹² His contribution to Chinese Islamic thought was in pioneering the use of the terminology of Confucian philosophy to establish a system of Islamic thought that was appropriate to the Chinese society in which the Hui found themselves. His books carry appreciative prefaces by contemporary Han literati and his works were often respectfully referred to by Muslims in China as the *Chinese Scripture* (*Hanjing*). Liu Zhi's writings became very influential, at first among the Hui of southern China and then across the nation, but it was in the remote northwestern town of Lintan in Gansu province near the borders with Tibet that his first real followers appeared towards the end of the Qing dynasty in the Xidaotang or Hall of the Western Pathway.¹³

Contacts with the Outside World and the Entry of Sufism

In the early part of the Qing dynasty, the Manchu government continued to restrict foreign trade. From 1644–1655, the restrictions that had been imposed by the Ming court were continued, but from 1655–1684 strict prohibition was enforced while the opponents of the Qing conquest were being suppressed. After 1684, when Taiwan was occupied and the power base of Zheng Chenggong (also known as Koxinga) destroyed, the prohibition effectively disappeared and seaborne overseas trade began to expand again. This made it possible for more and more Muslims to go to Mecca on the *hajj* which in turn gave a boost to Islam within China.¹⁴

During their travels in the Arab world and Central Asia, Chinese pilgrims came into contact with Sufism which they brought back

12 The term *tianfang* 天方, literally 'heavenly square' or 'heavenly cube', originally referred to the Ka'ba, the cubic building in the Great Mosque in Mecca which contains the black stone that is believed by Muslims to be from the temple of Abraham. In Chinese, by extension, it has come to mean: Mecca, the Arab world and Islam.

13 Bai Shouyi (1982) p 36–37; Gao Zhanfu (1991) p 118–127. See Chapter 9 for the Hall for the Western Pathway.

14 Ma Tong (1983) p 115–6.

with them to China. Two important Chinese Sufi orders, the Jahriyya of Ma Mingxin, and Ma Laichi's Khufiyya Multicoloured Mosque *Huasi* 花寺, were created in this way and the flow of Sufism and other branches of Islam into China was reinforced by Arab traders and missionaries who took advantage of the new openness to travel in China. Some existing Chinese Ahongs and Imams embraced the new sects, for example the founder of the Great Tomb order Qi Jingyi, Ma Zongsheng of the Bijiachang brotherhood and Ma Shouzhen of the Mufuti, and this led to conflicts with supporters of traditional *Gedimu* Islam.¹⁵

This problem was exacerbated by a divide and rule policy under which the government set one sect against another, although, given the propensity of the Hui to divide themselves on religious grounds, this cannot have been a difficult policy to implement. Harsh Qing taxation policies and official corruption increased the burden on Muslim communities and in some cases their economies were destroyed and conditions of dire poverty were created. Poverty and the perception of exploitation and ethnic and religious discrimination were factors in the anti-Qing risings that broke out among Hui communities, beginning with those in Hezhou (Linxia), Xunhua and Didao (Lintao) in the eighteenth century.¹⁶

The *menhuan* system of Sufi orders, which Chinese writers regard as characteristic of Chinese Islam, evolved in what was essentially a peasant Muslim society and was found in Hui, Dongxiang, Baoan and Salar communities and persists to the present day. *Menhuan* tended to be more influential in areas where the Muslim population is most concentrated, for example, Gansu and Ningxia, and less so where Muslims are in a minority scattered thinly throughout the Han population as in Yunnan. The *menhuan* gradually assumed greater importance in these communities both for religious reasons and for mutual protection, and the leaders acquired considerable temporal as well as spiritual power as their parishes expanded. The Sufi *shaykh* at the head of a *menhuan* became, in many cases, a powerful landowner. Religious taxes were paid by the congregation, including *tianke*, the compulsory zakat, a tithe of one tenth of the income, in China usually paid after the Autumn harvest; the *feituer* (fitr) payable at festivals, in particular Id al-fitr at the end of Ramadan, and *nietie* (niit), voluntary donations to the mosque or gifts to

15 For details, see chapters 7, 8 and 9.

16 Ma Tong (1983) p 115–116.

the Ahong.¹⁷ The income from religious taxes was under the control of the main Ahong and, as the wealth of a community increased, could be substantial. Ahongs bought or were given land for the community which they rented out to poor Hui farmers. Tenants working on waqfiyya land paid rent to the mosques in addition to their tithes, putting the Ahong in the position of a landlord.

The system by which leaders of Hui communities were selected also underwent a change. Ahongs had initially been appointed by invitation on the basis of their spiritual reputations and Qur'anic scholarship, but increasingly they were appointed by their congregations from within the communities and the position gradually became hereditary.

The *menhuan* system started in the Didao (Lintao) and Hezhou (Linxia) area of southern Gansu and may have reflected the type of society in which it developed, a remote border region where soldiers had been settled to open previously uncultivated land while garrisoning the area. The land in southwestern Gansu is relatively fertile with plentiful water and lush grass which, although hilly and not attractive to rice farmers from the plains, is quite suitable for making a simple living by hill farming. Sheep farming is still an important part of the local economy today.¹⁸

As the southwestern Gansu region was remote from mainstream Chinese culture, it was considered a cultural backwater by the Han Chinese, but among the Hui, education in the mosques had developed to a high degree and theological disputation was popular. Xi'an had been the seat of the most eminent religious thinkers, but by the middle of the Qing dynasty Hezhou, which became known as China's Little Mecca, became extremely important. Missionaries from the Arab world, Persia and Central Asia regularly visited to preach in Hezhou and many pilgrims from Hezhou and Didao made the *hajj* to Mecca. Some Muslim residents of the region also travelled west for trade.

The Hajj in the Nineteenth Century

The Hui maintained contacts with the lands of their origin and sustained their religious inspiration through the *Hajj* pilgrimage. The

17 Collecting boxes outside mosques in China today bear the two characters for *nietie* 乜帖.

18 Ma Tong (1983) p 116-117; author's visit to Linxia and rural southwestern Gansu, September 1992.

possibility of participating depended not only on the ability of the pilgrim to finance the journey but also on government restrictions on leaving and returning to China.

A survey carried out in 1950 into the number of Muslims from Linxia who had made the *hajj* over the centuries revealed that since the Kangxi and Qianlong reigns, groups of at least ten pilgrims, both male and female, had made the journey to Mecca annually, that sometimes they numbered as many as twenty or thirty and that these numbers continued to make the pilgrimage through the nineteen thirties.¹⁹

One account of the way Chinese Muslims reached Mecca during the nineteenth century reveals the difficult and tortuous journey they had to make.

'It is interesting to notice what route is usually followed by modern Chinese Mussulmans on their way to Mecca. In 1893, I met one of these pilgrims at Bhamo; he had come all the way from Ho Nan [Henan] province and was going by steamer to Rangoon. In 1841 a Yun Nan Mussulman, who, afterwards became prominent in the Panthay rebellion as "Old Papa", went by way of Esmok to Kaing Tung, Legya and Ava (Mandalay); thence in a junk laden with Yun Nan copper to Rangoon. From this port he travelled by steamer to Calcutta, Ceylon, Malabar, Socotra, Aden and Mocha; thence to Jeddah. The route he took by sailing vessel was ultimately by way of Acheen [settlement at the northern tip of Sumatra]; but he was wrecked on the way, and most of the places he called at are not at all identifiable by the uninitiated. Then he went to Penang, Malacca, Singapore, Canton (where he stayed in the old mosque), up the West River to Nan-ning and Peh-seh. Peh-seh [Pingxiang on the border with Vietnam] is now the great trading centre for the foot traffic between Pakhoi, Kwei Chou and Yun Nan. But he also gives us a land route, which is exactly that of 2,000 years ago, and is evidently so described by him with the intention of encouraging the Kan Suh [Gansu] Mussulmans to do their religious duty; to wit, the Kia-yuh Pass [Jiayuguan] to Hami, Turfan, Aksu, Ush, Kashgar, Andijan, Kokand, Khodjand, Samarcand, Bokhara, Bagdad, Aintab, Aleppo, Damascus, Jerusalem, Cairo; or as an alternative, Aintab, Antioch, Jaffa . . .'²⁰

19 Ma Tong (1983) p 118.

20 Parker, E.H. *China* London (1917) p 83-4.

The pilgrim referred to as 'Old Papa' was the Muslim scholar Ma Dexin, whose diary of his *hajj* voyage was written in Arabic and translated into Chinese in 1861 by his disciple Ma Anli. He left Yunnan in the company of a group of Muslim merchants during the winter of 1841 at a time when China's seaborne communications were being disrupted by the Opium War. Passing through what is today the Xishuangbanna region of Yunnan, the group made their way into Burma, taking a boat at Mandalay down the Irrawaddy to Rangoon for an ocean steamer which took them via Bengal, India and Ceylon into the Arabian sea and the Red Sea. They disembarked at Jeddah and travelled to Mecca by camel, horse and donkey.²¹

Muslims, Han and Tibetans in Northwest China

The first full accounts in European languages of the life of Muslim communities in China in the latter part of the Qing dynasty was given by the French writers de Thiersant and D'Ollone and Marshall Broomhall of the China Inland Mission in London.²² There was close

21 Ma Dexin (1988).

22 de Thiersant, P. Dabry *Le Mahometisme en Chine et dans le Turkestan Oriental*, Leroux, Paris 1878; and d'Ollone *Recherches sur les Musulmans Chinois*, Leroux, Paris 1911. The first significant English language study of Muslim China, *Islam in China: a neglected problem* by Marshall Broomhall appeared in 1910, but was given rather short shrift by D'Ollone in a preface to his own book:

This work had been completely finished and was only awaiting the publication of the study by M. Vissiere of his study of our collection of mahomedan works – sixth and last section of the volume – in the *Revue du Monde Musulman* when we received M. [Marshall] Broomhall's *Islam in China* published on the 25th of January 1911.

The appearance of this volume which had taken, so the preface declared, nineteen years of study and on the spot enquiries with the aid of nearly two hundred assistants could have made us believe that our work was from then on useless, whether our contribution had been offered to the public in advance or whether on the other hand it was contradicted and ruined by discoveries of greater value.

By luck on which we could not congratulate ourselves enough, not a line of our work was undermined by the work of our emulator.

M. Broomhall traces the chart of Chinese Islam with the help of all the studies published to date and adds to it various documents on the Muslims, in truth few in number and of little moment, who live on the coasts or the river provinces of the centre: it is the work of Dabry de Thiersant translated into English and condensed, but embellished with photographs and enriched with the aid of studies published afterwards by various scholars, among which M. Broomhall concedes gallantly the first place belongs to the French.'

contact between the Muslims and Tibetan communities in Northwest China. The monastery of Lhabrang (Xiahe in Chinese) in the present day Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of southern Gansu is one of the six major monasteries of the Yellow Hat (Gelugpa) sect of Tibetan Buddhism, along with Ganden, Sera, Drepung and Tashilunpo, all within the borders of the present day Tibetan Autonomous Region, and Taersi in Qinghai. Lhabrang was home to over five thousand monks under a Living Buddha who ranked third in the hierarchy after the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama. The town of Xiahe grew up close to the monastery. In the Qing dynasty, the majority of inhabitants were Hui, and today the Hui still manage most of the shops in the town. The Tibetans enjoyed better relations with the Hui than with the Han Chinese. In spite of this, or possibly because, the mosque kept a very low profile and was just one small building. 'Most of the Muslims have taken Tibetan wives, who retain their religion with their dress and free customs. There is frequent drunkenness, all the more surprising since it is rare in China. Children sometimes have the religion of the father, sometimes that of the mother or sometimes a happy combination. From Lhabrang to Hezhou, most of the villages, Tibetans aside, contain Muslims, particularly in the magnificent plain which surrounds Hezhou' (present day Linxia in Gansu province).²³

Hezhou Today: Capital of the Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture

D'Ollone's account of Hezhou after the rebellions of the nineteenth century reflects the depredations of the Qing suppression of the disorders.

'Whatever the position of Muslims in Hezhou in the past, the prefectural capital is prohibited to Muslims today: they do not have the right of residence. There is only a huge suburb to the south of the ramparts which is at the moment inhabited almost entirely by Muslims who amount to two thousand families. It is a genuine town, also walled, opposite the prefectural capital, but in the humble situation of a place of [relegation].'²⁴

It must be said that, valuable though de Thiersant's work is, it is itself shot through with errors, for example, in place names and does not make any attempt to identify the Chinese sources on which it is based.

23 D'Ollone p 233–235.

24 D'Ollone p 235.

Hezhou occupied a major position in Chinese Islam and has often been called China's Mecca or the Little Mecca of China.²⁵ Today it is known as Linxia and is the administrative centre of the Linxia Hui Autonomous prefecture which controls seven counties in southwestern Gansu. Linxia is approximately one hundred miles west of Lanzhou the provincial capital of Gansu. The road to Linxia even today is a winding mountain trail, bumpy and with sharp hairpin bends. It is susceptible to landslides and, on my journey there, fresh rockfalls which had blocked part of the road during the morning were being cleared by afternoon. Road improvements are beginning to reduce the isolation of Linxia. There is now a regular minibus service from Lanzhou and a Japanese company is constructing a tunnel at Qidaoliang (Seven Way Bridge) which was being used in September 1992, although it was still incomplete, and at which a toll is payable.

By the time the tunnel is reached, the few Han villages have petered out and it is Hui territory down to the old borders of Tibet. In Linxia itself, trade is booming. To the left of the road from Lanzhou is a spacious dealing yard with the atmosphere of a stock exchange in which hundreds of apparently identical men in white caps and beards haggle noisily over live sheep and sheepskins. The main mosque on Liberation Street just beyond the police station is large and plain and was probably rebuilt in the 1980s (the Imam was in the building but too shy to come out to talk). Like all predominantly Muslim towns in China, the market areas are constantly busy with brisk trading in silks and cottons opposite the Xinhua Bookshop. Local craft products including exquisitely decorated calabashes, lethal Hui or Baoan knives, carpets and copper goods are on sale on North Boulevard. Many of the bookstalls in the markets and on the streets stock religious texts, new and secondhand. These include copies of the Qur'an and textbooks for learning Arabic. In the nearby

25 The name Little Mecca has also been applied to other centres of Muslim population throughout China including Shadian in Yunnan. It does not seem to imply that these are holy places comparable with Mecca and Medina, more that they are important religious centres with large *madrasas* and celebrated Ahongs. There is some confusion in D'Ollone's account as he quotes Reclus as saying that 'this town of [Kinkipao] is the Mecca and Medina of the Chinese empire in *L'Empire du Milieu* and one can read in Grenard's *Note on the Ethnographie of Gansu* that 'Hezhou, town of 30,000 souls is populated almost exclusively by Muslims and this city which has at least twenty four mosques can be considered to be the genuine centre of Gansu Islam.' 'Kinkipao' is in fact not Hezhou, but Jinjibao, a town which was near present-day Wuzhong in Ningxia but was destroyed in the violence of the 1860s. De Thiersant also mistakenly identifies Hezhou as Urumqi.

smaller town of Guanghe a street bookstall outside the mosque has similar publications. Books on the history and practice of Islam in China are also available. The official Xinhua Bookshop has a small stock of standard Chinese fare but also restricted *neibu* copies of *Linxia Wenshi ziliao* (*Materials on the History and Culture of Linxia*) which retell the history of the town and its region in the early part of the twentieth century.

The Tibetan connection remains extremely important in Linxia. There are many Tibetans in the town, easily distinguishable by their clothing. Monks from nearby Lhabrang and nomads from the grasslands of the high plains shopping for provisions, arrive in town by car rather than on horseback as in the days of the d'Ollone visit.²⁶

Like Muslim communities throughout China, the Hui of Linxia trace their origins back to the military settlers of the Yuan dynasty who opened up new farming land while garrisoning the region. Linxia is relatively fertile for northwest China and suitable both for agriculture and pasturing sheep and during the Ming and Qing dynasties it emerged as one of the most concentrated area of Hui settlement in China. Its claim to fame in Chinese Islam is that it was the area in which the *menhuan* system, characteristic of Chinese Islam, developed and in which the *gongbei* or tomb cult emerged, as well as for its role in mosque education. Many mosques were built in the central Bafang area of Linxia by members of the Muslim elite intending to strengthen the influence of their *menhuan*. After making their money the wealthy Hui gentry built magnificent mansions and mosques in the Bafang district which gradually emerged as a major economic, religious and political centre for the Hui people.²⁷

26 Personal observations during visit to Linxia September 16 1992. Mr Wang, a Han driver who took me up to Linxia echoed the general prejudices that the Han have about the Hui, that they are uncultured, illiterate and only interested in making a fast buck from dealing. Wang knew the area well, spoke Tibetan that he had learned in Gannan, the Tibetan region of southern Gannan, and had driven to Lhasa on several occasions but was clearly uncomfortable in dealing with the Hui. The Hui have their own prejudices about the Han whom they consider to be dirty and useless at making money. However, some Hui do concede that there is too much emphasis on trade and too little on education in their community.

27 Qiu Yulan and Yu Zhensheng *Zhongguo Yisilanjiao jianzhu* (China's Islamic Architecture) Xinhua, Beijing, p 174-8.

Hui Insurrections in the Nineteenth Century

In the second half of the nineteenth century the Qing dynasty entered into a critical period. The Xianfeng emperor, never a healthy man at the best of times, died on February 11 1861. He was succeeded by his five-year old son Caiqun as the Tongzhi emperor (1862–1874). Caiqun was a minor for most of his reign and affairs of state were in the hands of a Council of Regents. A palace coup brought to power Prince Gong, the younger brother of the Xianfeng emperor and Xianfeng's two empresses, Ci Xi and Ci An, who ruled as regents. Ci Xi, the Empress Dowager gradually became the dominant regent and then the *de facto* ruler of China, a fact that conservative Manchu and Chinese officials found it extremely difficult to accept.

In addition to this constitutional and successional crisis, a series of political challenges to the Manchu Qing rule in different regions of China seriously weakened the authority of the Qing imperial government. Of these the greatest threat was the Taiping Rebellion, the name given to the revolutionary millenarian movement which rose in the southwestern province of Guangxi and called itself the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace (*Taiping tianguo* 太平天国). The Taipings controlled much of southern China from January 1851 when they rose in Guangxi and set out on a crusade northwards, taking the imperial city of Nanjing in March 1853, and the threat to the dynasty only came to an end with the suicide of their leader Hong Xiuquan in June 1864.

Other insurrections, at times loosely linked to the Taiping, undermined Qing control of China. These included the Nian self-defence and bandit units that controlled large parts of the present day provinces of Henan, Shandong and Anhui¹ and the Muslim insurrections.

1 See Teng, S.Y. *The Nien Army and their Guerrilla Warfare (1851–1868)* Mouton, Paris (1961).

The Muslim insurrections are often classified together as one group of risings or rebellions but there were three major separate outbreaks of violence involving Muslims in the mid-nineteenth century. The first was the revolt in Yunnan in southwestern China which lasted from 1855 until 1873 and is sometimes known as the Panthay Rebellion after the Burmese word for the Muslim ethnic group linked to migrant Hui traders from Yunnan, although the name Panthay is not used among Yunnanese Hui themselves.² The second was the Hui rising in the northwest provinces of Shaanxi and Gansu which lasted from 1862–1878. The third outbreak was the insurrection led by Yakub Beg from Kashgar which he established as his capital city between 1865 and 1873. It was the suppression of the Taiping rebellion and to a lesser extent the Nian which preoccupied the Qing court, leaving them few resources to check the progress of the other insurrections in their early stages. Once the Taiping and Nian had been brought under control, the Qing forces were able to turn their attention to the Muslims.

The Muslim Rising in Yunnan

During the winter of 1855, Han and Hui silver miners in Lin'an (today Jianshui county, to the south of Kunming) came into conflict over mining rights. Mineral workings belonging to Han miners that had previously been productive were virtually exhausted and the Han wanted to work in Hui-owned mines. Hui miners had, however, been experiencing similar problems and turned down the request. The two sides took their cases to law and the Hans did not succeed in getting an order that they be allowed to work in Hui mines. Hui people were slaughtered by the Han, their livestock were killed and their farms destroyed. This affected at least seven hundred families and in retaliation, hundreds of Hui under Ma Linghan gathered at Xiaobanqiao, a few miles from Kunming, and took reprisals on those who had helped the killers. Government officials branded the Hui as plotters and creators of disorder and on April 16, 1856, Qing Sheng, a local official, ordered the indiscriminate killing of Hui. The Han landowners assembled a militia at Lin'an and spent three days searching for and killing any Hui they found, male or female, old or young: as many as two or three thousand may have been slaughtered. The Hui response to this grew into an armed rebellion and a search for political independence.

² Jianping Wang (1966) p 19–20.

In the summer of 1856, groups of Hui led by Ma Jinbao and Lan Pinggui rose in revolt at Yaozhou (known today as Yao'an). In August, Du Wenxiu rose in rebellion at Menghua and attacked and occupied Dali in the west of the province. Hui communities all over Yunnan followed their lead. Because of the numbers involved, local officials offered an amnesty, but the rebels refused and laid siege to the provincial capital, Kunming, forcing the Governor, Heng Chun to commit suicide. The Qing authorities drafted in a new governor, Zhang Liangji, and a military commander and instructed them to suppress the insurrection. However, when the siege still had not been lifted by February 1858, the officials had no option but to call in prestigious Hui leaders from Sichuan and Zhejiang to mediate. Agreements were signed, a compromise was reached and the rebellion temporarily ceased. It flared up again when Zhang Liangji went back on the agreements and started killing Hui. The Hui massed in self defence, Ma Rulong held a mass oath-taking rally in Kunming and Du Wenxiu retook Dali and by May, the entire province was in revolt. Attempts to divide the rebels were partly successful and Ma Rulong capitulated in 1862 and was persuaded to write to Du Wenxiu asking him to surrender. Du stood firm and wrote back that the Manchus had occupied China for over two hundred years and that the time had come for Han and Hui to work together to overthrow them. He set up an independent government at Dali under a white banner on which were written the words. 'Deprive the Manchu Qing of their Mandate to rule' (*geming Manqing* 革命滿清). The rebel administration which called itself Pingnan 平南 (Pacifying the South) framed its own laws and established its own structures of government. At its height, Du Wenxiu's independent sultanate controlled almost half of the territory of Yunnan. It was finally crushed by the forces of a new governor, Cen Yuying, who had access to foreign weapons and training methods and Du Wenxiu was publicly beheaded. By the end of the eighteen year insurrection in 1873, the death toll ran to hundreds of thousands.³

In Guizhou province which borders Yunnan to the north-east, there was major social disorder and communal violence between 1854 and 1873. This is usually known as the Miao rebellion, taking its name from the minority ethnic group which played the most important part in the insurrection. However, the violence spread to other ethnic groups including the local Hui community who were battling against

3 Lin Gan (1957) p 37-46.1

crippling poverty and discrimination. Muslims in December 1858 rose up against the authorities after the murder of a Hui man in Pu'an county by a local Han family. Fighting spread into other counties and thousands died.⁴

The Hui Insurrection in Shaanxi, Gansu and Qinghai, 1862–1878

It is difficult to exaggerate the scale of the devastation caused to north-west China, and to its Muslim population in particular, by the violence in Shaanxi, Gansu and Qinghai and its suppression by the armed forces of the Qing dynasty. Contemporary accounts all agree on the carnage.

'It is stated by those who visited the province soon after the rebellion, that the soldiers and not the insurgents destroyed and looted the villages and devastated the country. Rebel bands scoured the country and great distress and even cannibalism are said to have prevailed. Colonel Bell affirms that the population of [G]ansu was reduced from 15,000,000 to 1,000,000, and that nine out of ten Chinese were supposed to have been killed, and two out of every three Mohammedans. These figures may be somewhat overstated, but in an extended journey through the province he states that "all the villages and farmsteads for miles and miles in all directions were in ruins, and the huge cultivable hills were for the most part deserted."'⁵

Zuo Zongtang, the official responsible for the suppression of the insurrection reported in a memorial to the emperor that, 'With the exception of the 2,000 or more Muslims who fled together with Bai Yanhu, there are no more than 60,000 of the original 700,000 Shaanxi Muslims who have survived to be rehabilitated in Gansu.'⁶ The number of refugees resettled was probably nearer to 70–80,000, but the scale of the carnage is not in dispute.

4 Jenks (1994) p 132–136.

5 Broomhall *Islam in China* (1910) p 155. Broomhall's evidence comes from two articles published by Colonel Mark Bell VC, CBE in *The Asiatic Quarterly Review* in January and July 1896 and based on Bell's first hand experience of Gansu.

6 *Pingding Shuan-Gan Xinjiang Huifei Fanglue* CCLXXXVI, 8 in Chu (1966) p vii. On the fate of the refugees led by Bai Yanhu, see the final section of this chapter.

Shaanxi

Behind the insurrection lay years of conflict between the Hui and the Han. This included attacks on the Hui by militia operated by Han landlords and court cases involving disputes over family, marriages and land. According to the *Qin Long Huiwu jilue* (*Brief Records of Muslim affairs in Shaanxi and Gansu*), 'Because of this, Hui and Han became involved in armed feuds on a regular basis and it seems that there is no time or place when there is not a feud.' One of the places where these feuds had begun early and were extremely brutal was the border between the counties of Weinan and Dali in the Wei river valley to the north-east of Xi'an.⁷ A contemporary account noted that 'From the beginning [relations between] Hui and Han to the north of the Wei river have not been harmonious and they feuded with each other. However, the Han did not defeat the Hui but Hui people in many villages were slaughtered and [their houses] burned and destroyed. Therefore, the Hui of Dali county retaliated against this cruelty, the Han and Hui of the two counties were unable to be at peace and the feuds became more and more violent.'⁸

In 1862, the Qing military establishment was concentrating on an attempt to recapture Nanjing from the Taipings. Nanjing had been renamed Heavenly Capital (*Tianjing*) by the Taiping leadership and the Qing accurately identified the insurrection as the major threat to the dynasty. Troop movements to surround Nanjing had left something of a military vacuum in Shaanxi province and in March or April a peasant army from Sichuan and Yunnan, led by Lan Dashun crossed the border from Sichuan into Hanzhong, the county in the southwest of Shaanxi. Lan Dashun was a Hui, originally from Shaanxi, who had moved to Yunnan in search of work, at a time when new mining was creating prosperity in southwestern China. Joining forces with other roving bands who had been associated with the Taiping and Nian rebels, including one army led by Chen Decai, the peasant forces crossed the Wuguan pass and headed for Xi'an which they reached on May 17. They failed to capture Xi'an and set out to take other towns. Anti-Hui leaflets began to appear in Huazhou and Weinan. The prefect of Huazhou, while dealing with court cases involving disputes between Han and Hui litigants, had

7 Wu Wanshan p 62.

8 *Pingding Guanlong jilue* (Brief Notes on the Pacification of the Passes and Gansu) in Wu Wanshan (1991) p 63. Wu Wanshan (1991) p 62-7 on feuds between the Hui and Han in general.

stated openly that the Hui were 'colluding with the Long Hairs (the Taipings) in plotting rebellion' and that 'killing a Hui means one less traitor'.

Government troops in Shaanxi were under strength because of the priority given to putting down the Taiping uprising and the provincial authorities had encouraged local landlords and officials to establish their own militias to fight off the rebels. 'Quite naturally, the Chinese gentry organised the Chinese while the [Muslim] religious leaders organised the [Muslims] independently of each other.' This led to a great increase in tensions between the communities which was exacerbated by Han accusations that the Hui had supported the Taiping rebels rather than the local Han people.⁹

An incident in Huazhou, one of the county-level administrative centres, to the north-east of Xi'an precipitated an episode of serious intercommunal violence and may have been the spark that kindled the conflagration. According to a memorial sent by the provincial governor, Yingqi, to the emperor, the incident began when a group of Hui soldiers, drafted by the Qing government to help suppress the Taiping rebellion, but defeated and returning home, went to a Han trader to buy some bamboo poles. The Han seller put up the price and the Hui refused to pay. In a fight that followed several Hui were injured and some died, and although the confrontation was brought to an end by local people, a Han crowd later went into the Hui village in the evening and set it alight. Since the Hui and the Han had already been mobilised into separate local militias, the ensuing battles were violent and widespread. Fighting soon spread to Weinan to the west of Huazhou and Dali to the northeast and the rebellion was well under way.¹⁰

The Huazhou militia burned down Hui villages and made off with Hui women and property. Provoked by this humiliation, the Huazhou Hui revolted, followed by other Hui people on both banks of the Wei river. The Hui of the Weinan region took up arms in their thousands and sent representatives to liaise with Chen Decai. Guided by the Huis, Chen Decai's forces moved into the Weinan region and on the 22nd of the 4th month arrived in the county town. The two armies stormed the *xian* (county) capital, killed the magistrate Cao Shihe and went on to take Huazhou. An anti-Qing rhyme going the rounds among the Weinan Hui at the time went something like this:

⁹ HZJS p 42; Chu (1966) p 23-4.

¹⁰ Chu (1966) p 25, citing *Pingding Shuan Gan Xinjiang fanglue* XIII, 7.

'April twenty third the same,
The Long Hairs to Weinan came,
Trashed the city first,
Killed officials next,
Slew a shoal of local braves.'

Wangge village and Qiangbai township in Dali and Cangtuo town in Weinan were the two main centres of what rapidly became a widespread insurrection. Jonathan Lipman has pointed out that the disorder that spread through the Wei valley 'did not follow any pre-arranged plan of rebellion, but rather ran along the lines of communication between Muslim communities, all of which feared and reacted against the threat of Han violence.'¹¹

The area around the provincial capital of Xi'an had remained peaceful until a member of the Han rural élite, Mei Jintang, led a militia unit of over two thousand strong to attack Hui villages in Chang'an county just outside Xi'an. Hui houses were burned to the ground and their occupants killed. The militia then proceeded to attack a Hui village, Huichu in the county of Huxian. The entire village was razed to the ground and thousands of dead were 'left lying in the ashes.' These attacks were repeated in many Hui villages and while the old, the ailing and the helpless were slaughtered, those who could flee regrouped on the banks of the Wei river and organised themselves into militia units which could defend their remaining villages and counterattack the Han militia to take revenge.¹²

The governor of Shaanxi, Yingqi, sent a senior member of the local élite to negotiate a cease-fire and a peace agreement with the Hui. Han militia members massed in their thousands assuming that he wanted protection from the 'rebels' but he ordered them to disband on pain of being accused of rebellion and asked for the surrender of one of the Hui leaders Ren Laowu. Unwilling to be a scapegoat, Ren and others captured and killed the governor's envoy.¹³

Gaoling and Huayi were attacked and in May, Xi'an was surrounded. According to Wendjang Chu, Xi'an was put under siege on June 29 after the Hui forces had already besieged Tongzhou. Xi'an was almost cut off, overcrowded with refugees and its supplies of fuel, salt and other essentials rapidly running out. Ma Dezhaoh, the

11 HZJS p 42-43; Lipman (1981) p 24.

12 Chu (1966) p 25; Lipman (1981) p 24-5.

13 Chu (1966) p 26-7.

military officer defending the city brought in salt and charcoal from the riverside village of Caodian in spite of being ambushed but the siege continued.

In July, Hui forces launched an offensive on Jingyan, Sanyuan, Fengxiang and other towns and villages and the whole of Shaanxi exploded. The Qing response came in August when the imperial commissioner Sheng Bao, an officer of the White Bordered Manchu Banner and none too successful veteran of the campaign against the Taipings and the Nian was despatched to Shaanxi. His entourage was attacked as they crossed the Tong pass and he apparently ensconced himself in Xi'an as soon as he reached the safety of the city and at first resisted instructions to leave the town and suppress the rebels who were still active in Tongzhou and Chaoyi in the east of the province. Nevertheless his forces did lift the siege of Xi'an and he finally agreed to move to Tongzhou to carry out the policy of the court.

In November, Duolonga's forces entered Shaanxi and the fighting grew more intense. In January 1863, Duolonga was appointed commander of the Imperial forces in Shaanxi in place of Sheng Bao who was relieved of his command, taken into custody and had all his property confiscated. Duolonga's troops broke through the Hui lines at Wangge and Qiangbai, capturing them on March 19. By the end of May, eastern Shaanxi was effectively under the control of the court again. In October, Lintong, Sanyuan, Jingguan and Fengxiang were retaken and Hui commanders in Shaanxi began to liaise more systematically with their counterparts in Gansu province to the west. Two important cities in Gansu, Guyuan and Pingliang¹⁴ had been occupied by Hui insurgents and some of the defeated Hui forces in Shaanxi were retreating in that direction.¹⁵

The Hui rebels worked closely with roving bands from outside Shaanxi, including the troops of Lan Dashun who came back in November 1863 and occupied the walled city of Zhouzhi. In 1862, Hui units in Weihe had responded to the movement of these other armies into Shaanxi by stepping up their anti-Qing activities but in the first month of 1864, many of the outsiders left Shaanxi to return to Nanjing in an attempt to defend the Heavenly Capital against the Qing forces surrounding it. Lan Dashun's forces were routed at Zhouzhi and dispersed in the third month of 1864. Duolonga was

¹⁴ Both in present-day Ningxia.

¹⁵ HZJS p 42-43; Chu (1966) p 27-45.

injured in the campaign to retake Zhouzhi and died of his wounds but the situation in Shaanxi had been reversed. Within a year, the Heavenly Capital of the Taipings had fallen to Qing forces and this was a major setback for the Hui in Shaanxi as the Qing government was able to divert forces to Shaanxi. In the tenth month of 1866, Zhang Zongyu led a 60,000 strong Nian army into Shaanxi. Prompted by this move, Hui rebels, sometimes in conjunction with the Nian and sometimes alone, took up arms again and kept the Qing armies on the run. In 1867, Zuo Zongtang, Governor (*zongdu*) of Shaanxi and Gansu and concurrently Imperial Commissioner (*qinchai*) moved the units that had suppressed the Taipings to Shaanxi and by the sixth month of 1868 had eradicated the Nian bands within Shanxi and Shaanxi. Hui forces moved out and by the fourth month of 1869 had arrived as a single group [check this] in Gansu, bringing the conflict in Shaanxi to an end.¹⁶

At the height of the rising, the Hui forces comprised approximately 200,000 men in eighteen battalions, most of them drawn from the farms, but including also artisans, small traders and pedlars. Many of the main leaders including Ma Shengyan, Ma Zhenhe, Yang Wenzhi and Bai Yanhu were working men. Others including He Mingtang, Zou Yulong, Ahong Guan, Second Ahong Guo, a man known as the Second Hezhou Ahong and Feng Junfu were religious leaders. He Mingtang was one of the first to take the lead in the insurrection but he and the Second Hezhou Ahong vacillated and secretly carried out peace negotiations. The defeats at Wangge and Qiangbai have been blamed on their wavering. Before the end of the fighting in Shaanxi, He Mingtang and two other leaders, Chen Lin and Yan Xingchun had capitulated; Yang Wenzhi, Ma Zhenhe, Feng Junfu and You Yulu were killed; Bai Yanhu, Ma Changshun, Ma Shengyan, Cui Wei, Hua Dacai and others had withdrawn to Gansu with their troops, taking over a hundred thousand men in total.¹⁷

West to Gansu

With the defeat of the insurrection in Shaanxi, the focus of the conflict shifted to Gansu, an area which then included not only the present Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, but also that part of Qinghai province in the vicinity of Xining, and part of eastern Xinjiang

16 HZJS p 43-4; Chu (1966) p 45-50.

17 HZJS p 44.

stretching from Hami to Urumqi (Dihua). The whole Gansu region and Shaanxi province was controlled by Zuo Zongtang, the Governor-general of Shaanxi and Gansu who was based in Lanzhou.¹⁸

There is evidence that some of the Hui fighters in the Shaanxi conflict were originally from Gansu and when Hui units fled to Gansu in late 1862 they were certainly joined by local Muslims in riots and attacks on Hans. A conflict at Baiji township in Binzhou in Shaanxi province in September 1862 apparently involved Hui units from Gansu and Wen-djang Chu estimated that at least ten thousand Hui moved from Shaanxi into Gansu in October 1862 where Han residents were attacked and robbed. Fearing government repression, Ma Zhaoyuan approached other Hui leaders including Ma Hualong at Jinjibao, Zhou Fa at Tongxin and Wang Dagui at Yancha (now Haiyuan). The Hui leaders chose the city of Lingzhou as a base for resistance and defence against the expected government military action and killed troops of the Manchu Banner forces sent against them. More disturbances followed in December 1862 in Pingle, to the north of Ningxia (Yinchuan). Local officials attempted to implement a policy of reconciliation and this had some limited success. For example in the pacification of a Hui gathering at Yanchating (Haiyuan) in November 1862 when the Hui leader Wang Dagui was persuaded to surrender to the forces of the Manchu court and to convince Hui forces in the outlying villages that they should stop fighting. This was a success from the point of view of the Qing officials, but it split the Hui leadership and weakened them.¹⁹

There were four main centres of the Hui rising in Gansu. The first was Jinjibao (near present-day Wuzhong) under Ma Hualong. The insurrections in Ningxia (Yinchuan) and the eastern part of Gansu province were linked to the Hui leadership in Jinjibao. Hezhou (Linxia) was Ma Zhan'ao's base. The revolt in the area around Xining was led first by Ma Wenyi and later by Ma Guiyuan and Ma Benyuan. In these two areas, people of the Dongxiang and Salar ethnic groups took part in the rising alongside the Hui. In Suzhou (now Jiuquan county) at the northern end of the Gansu corridor, Ma Wenlü was the main leader.

Gansu covers an immense area and the political and military situation in the 1860s was complicated. In addition to the large Hui population, there were also many Hans who resented Manchu

18 Chu (1966) p 51.

19 Chu (1961) p 50-59.

domination. On the borders of Gansu and Shaanxi there were also scattered bands of demobilised soldiers, refugees and others who had joined them.

In 1869, Hui forces in Jinjibao launched a major campaign to defend their base. The government forces, commanded by Liu Songshan, a former officer in the Hunan or Xiang army established by Zeng Guofan to fight the Taiping, suffered a series of defeats with severe casualties and many losses including senior officers. In January 1870, Liu Songshan was shot dead and having lost their commander, the Qing forces beat a hurried retreat. The Hui forces launched a counter attack and rapidly gained the advantage. For the Qing government, the turning point was 1869 when Zuo Zongtang was able to turn his attention away from the Taiping and Nian rebellions and concentrate on suppressing the Hui rising in Gansu.

Jinjibao was besieged by government forces in July. Fortified stockades around the town were captured and food within the city ran out with the inhabitants having only 'straw, the roots of wheat plants, cattle skins and corpses to eat'.

In view of the desperate situation, Ma Hualong decided to surrender himself to the forces of the Qing in the hope that the lives of the besieged troops and people of Jinjibao would be spared. But when the imperial troops entered the city in January 1871, they butchered the population. Over a thousand people were slaughtered, including Ma Hualong, and the loss of their base of Jinjibao was a serious blow to the rebels.

Ma Hualong is still revered as one of the heroes of the rising and as a Sufi *shaykh*. The name and the town of Jinjibao were wiped out after the defeat of the Hui insurrection, but not far from the site, near the thriving town of Wuzhong, is the Honglefu *daotang*, which has a tomb said to contain the remains of Ma Hualong. It belongs to the Jahriyya (*Zheherenye*) Sufi order, the largest of the Islamic *menhuan* in China.²⁰

While the Jinjibao campaign was at a critical stage, Hui troops from Hezhou launched an attack eastward in an attempt to provide support. Their attack was launched via Anding (present-day Dingxi), Tongwei, Tai'an, Qingshui, Taizhou, Xihe and Lixian, posing a serious threat to the Qing Southern Route Army. In August 1871, Zuo Zongtang's forces took Anding and Hui forces countered to defend

20 Personal observation. For more information on Ma Hualong's relations with the Jahriyya Sufi order, see Chapter 8.

Hezhou. They constructed robust defence works on the west banks of the Tao river, placing their finest Hui, Salar and Dongxiang marksmen inside. In early 1872, the decisive battle of Taizi Mosque broke out during which Qing forces attacking the Hui strongholds were badly beaten and dispersed. This was probably Zuo Zongtang's worst defeat in the northwest with losses of officers and men and problems with supplies of food.

In 1873, Ma Zhan'ao, the senior Muslim commander in Hezhou, and probably a follower of the Khufiyya Sufi order, sent his subordinate, Ma Jun to negotiate a truce with Zuo Zongtang, effectively bringing to an end the ten-year campaign of the Hui in that part of Gansu. Zuo Zongtang was prepared to negotiate on terms other than an unconditional surrender for a number of reasons. The losses sustained by the Qing forces in the battle of Taizi Mosque had convinced him that a prolonged siege of Hezhou would be even more costly. He was also persuaded that Ma Zhan'ao, a follower of the moderate Khufiyya order would be prepared to serve the emperor and that this would be a successful example of 'using the Hui to control the Hui', *yi Hui zhi Hui* 以回治回. This can be seen as an instance of Hui and Han elites forming an alliance to control ethnic tension and the pressure from the Hui peasantry. Whatever the reason, Ma Zhan'ao and his extended family were able to preserve their control over the Hezhou region.²¹

According to information given to the members of Commandant D'Ollone's expedition, after the capture of Jinjibao and Ningxia and the execution of Ma Hualong, Zuo Zongtang offered an amnesty to the Hui inhabitants of Hezhou. The only condition was that they were prohibited from living in the town itself. The mosques were converted to Buddhist temples and the Hui population was entirely concentrated in the southern suburbs outside the wall.²²

Qinghai

In September 1872, the fighting spread to Xining. Bai Yanhu, Cui Wei, Yu Deyan and other Hui from Shaanxi, together with Hui and Salar bands from Qinghai, led by Ma Guiyuan and Ma Benyuan joined forces to resist the Qing imperial forces under Liu Jintang which had been sent to subdue their rebel bands. In the canyons and gorges to

21 HZJS p 45-47; Lipman (1981) p 27-29.

22 D'Ollone, p 236.

the east of Xining, the Hui forces constructed sturdy fortifications and fought over fifty skirmishes with the army of Liu Jintang causing them heavy losses and driving them back. However, the offensive by the Qing army and what they perceived as their betrayal by the Hui gentry proved too much for the Hui rebels and they were forced to retreat. Finally Bai Yanhu went north to Datong and turned again towards Hexi. Ma Guiyuan and his younger brother retreated to Xunhua. Xunhua fell to the imperial troops and the Ma brothers were executed. By January 1873 the insurrection in Qinghai had come to an end.²³

With the collapse of the Hui forces in Jinjibao, Hezhou and Xining, Suzhou (now Jiuquan and not to be confused with the city in Jiangsu province famous for its silk products) in the remote desert region of northwestern Gansu near the westernmost outpost of the Chinese empire, Jiayuguan, became the only remaining stronghold of the combined Shaanxi and Gansu Hui rebel forces which had harried the Qing armies since Spring 1865 under Ma Wenlu. In March 1873, when Bai Yanhu retreated to Hexi, he joined forces with Ma Wenlu but they buckled under pressure from the government forces. Bai retreated to Xinjiang and Ma could only hold out until September. The citizens of Suzhou were reduced to eating their horses but Ma would not capitulate. When Zuo Zongtang's troops finally entered the town there was a massacre.²⁴

Although the insurrections, like those of Yunnan and Xinjiang, are usually described as Muslim rebellions, the role of religion and religious affiliation was often confusing. Islam provided one reason for the distinction between Hui and Han. However the diversity of sects and Sufi orders militated against Muslim unity against the Han and contributed to the defeat of the risings. In addition, whether individuals supported or opposed the risings often depended at least as much on their social position as on their creed or ethnic origins. Landowners, Hui and Han often found they had more in common with each other than with Hui peasants and in particular with the roaming bands of Hui who moved through their region. Chapters seven, eight and nine which examine the growth of the different Islamic sects show how allegiances to *menhuan* or other orders brought Hui Muslims into conflict with the Chinese state.

23 HZJS p 47-48.

24 HZJS p 48.

Reconstruction

After the suppression of the rebellions in the northwest, Zuo Zongtang as Governor-General issued a number of injunctions in a carefully thought out and methodically implemented plan designed to shatter Hui solidarity and undermine the authority of the religious structures that had backed the risings. In Gansu and Qinghai, for example, all those classified as Shaanxi Hui were required to leave their homes, although in many cases they had been settled in Gansu for generations. Thousands of Hui families were resettled into new colonies. They were to be allocated land to farm, tools and seed at the discretion of the government and provision was to be made for the poor and needy, especially orphans, widows and the disabled. On resettlement, the Hui were not to be treated as rebels, but as good and loyal subjects. However, permits were needed for travel out of the reserved areas. The *Yihewani* and Sufi organisations were outlawed and Muslims were not allowed to conceal horses, weapons or ammunition. Resettled families had to have a plaque on their doors indicating the names, age, native place and sex of the family members. The families would then be integrated into the *baojia* neighbourhood watch system used throughout China. Governor Zuo's policies are seen by the Han Chinese as determined but scrupulous, directed at integrating the Hui rather than exterminating them.²⁵ This demographic engineering predated Stalin's forced migrations in the Soviet Union by sixty years and transformed the population map of northwestern China.

The Insurrection of 1895

In April 1894, a further outbreak of violence struck widely scattered areas of Didao and Hezhou (known today as Linxia) in Gansu and the Xining area of Qinghai. In many ways this was an aftershock from the insurrections of the 1860s, but it had its own causes which were due partly to factional conflict between Muslim sects and Sufi orders, and partly to conflict between the Muslims and Han landlords and officials. Because it was seen in part as a series of attacks on Han citizens by the Hui elite, the Qing government sent Dong Fuxiang, himself a Hui, but renowned for his butchery of the Hui in the previous conflict to quell the disorder, which he did by

25 Lin Gan (1957); Chu (1966) p 151–155; Wu Wanshou (1991) p 166–175.

using Ma Anliang, whom many Hui regarded as a traitor 'to set Hui against Hui'.²⁶

The Muslim rising of 1894–5 is not nearly as well known as its predecessors²⁷. This is partly because the Chinese government at the time was preoccupied with its war with Japan over the question of suzerainty of Korea. In 1895, the twenty first year of the reign of the Guangxu emperor, the Turkic speaking Muslim Salars²⁸ of Xunhua in present day Qinghai province rose up against their prefect. He had been unwise enough to declare that one Han Chinese was worth ten Muslims and that it was on this basis that he gave his judgments, condemning to death ten Muslims for one Chinese killed, or inflicting on them fines ten times as much as the amount a Han would have received for the same offence. The Salars killed the prefect and gained a lot of support in Hezhou and Xining. Existing conflict between the sects grew and violence spread.

Xining had played an important role in the previous great revolt. One of the leaders of the earlier rising, had been taken prisoner by General Liu Jintang and had been beheaded in Lanzhou with all his family, apart from his wife who was taken by one of the general's secretaries as a wife and a child who she was suckling and who was brought up in hiding. This child, Han Wenxiu grew up with the intention of revenging his father and on learning of the revolt at Xunhua, he encouraged the predominantly Muslim residents of the walled eastern suburb (Dongsanguan) of Xining to support them.

The military commander of Gansu, Dong Fuxiang, famed for his role in the suppression of the earlier revolt, sent General Deng Ceng who took the town and massacred the inhabitants: this is why there are no longer any Salars in the surrounding villages. Deng Ceng then marched on Xining to relieve the area held siege by the rebels. However his efforts to take Dongsanguan were fruitless.

At this point, Ma Anliang appeared on the scene. Ma Anliang was the son of one of the main Muslim rebels of Hezhou during the insurrection, who had surrendered to the Qing forces and been won

²⁶ HZJS p 53.

²⁷ Jonathan Lipman has written about it in some detail in his unpublished thesis *The Border World of Gansu 1895–1935* Stanford University PhD. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1981, but it is not so widely cited as an outbreak of communal violence in textbooks on Chinese history as are the insurrections of the 1860s.

²⁸ The Salars are recognised as a separate ethnic group in China today. Like their Hui neighbours, they are Muslims who migrated to China from Central Asia, but they retain their distinctive culture and Turkic language.

over. He was now an officer in the imperial army. Ma Anliang presented himself as a friend to the defenders of Dongsanguan and invited them to lay down their arms, giving his word as a Muslim that no harm would come to them: 'Disown me as a Muslim if I deceive you', he said. His co-religionists believed him: they handed over their arms and invited Ma Anliang to a great banquet to seal the reconciliation. During the feast, Ma Anliang's soldiers carried out a horrific massacre.

Ma Anliang was then sent to Hezhou, his native place, where the rebels had also laid siege to the walled town. Ma Anliang, who knew all of them succeeded in persuading them to lay down their arms. Here there was no devastating going back on his word. Nevertheless a good many Muslim notables were assassinated, no doubt many having aroused jealousy or being at the head of a rival sect. As a reward for his brilliant service to the imperial court, Ma Anliang was promoted to the posts of colonel of Hezhou and then general of Xinjiang, although he was remained in his home town of Hezhou.²⁹

One of the problems in analyzing these outbreaks of violence is that it is difficult to distinguish the point at which intra-Hui factional conflict stopped and Hui rebellion against the Han began. It is also important to note that the Hui people were not purely preoccupied with ethnically and religious based organisations and rebellions against the Han majority and the Manchu state. Many Hui transcended their ethnic origins. Hui officers and men saw service in the Chinese forces during the 1894-5 Sino-Japanese war. A Hui unit, commanded by Dong Fuxiang who had suppressed the Salar rising, was prominent during the Boxer Rising (1899-1901), and in the battle for the Legation Quarter of Beijing during the relief of the legations and the suppression of the rebels, it was Hui troops that engaged British forces at the Zhengyang gate.³⁰

The Dungans: Hui Outside China

One consequence of the insurrections of the late nineteenth century and their suppression was the flight of groups of Muslim families from northwestern China into what was then the territory of the Russian empire. They settled in Central Asia and became known as

²⁹ D'Ollone (1911) p 236-9.

³⁰ HZJS p 53.

the Dungans. Dungan is a Turkic name for the immigrants, and is also used by Xinjiang Uyghurs to refer to their Hui neighbours, but it also has connotations in Chinese of Eastern Gansu (*Dongbu Gansu* 东部甘肃) or the East Bank of the Yellow River (*Huanghe dong'an* 黄河东岸), where they originated. The Hui in the Russian Empire also referred to themselves as Hui, *Lao Huihui* 老回回 or Central Plainsmen *Zhongyuanren*. 中原人. In 1920, the Dungan population of what was about to become the USSR was 14,660 and by 1989 it had risen to 70,000.

In 1877–8, three groups of families, the largest led by Bai Yanhu, crossed the frontier. The refugees numbered over 3,000, and in the tradition of their ancestors who had opened up uncultivated land in northwest China, began to farm on the right bank of the river they knew by the name of Chu across from the town of Tokmak in Kyrgyz-speaking Russian Central Asia. Their settlement was called Karakunuz by the Kyrgyz, but known to the settlers as Yingpan (Encampment).³¹

Although the Dungans had arrived in Russian Turkestan by way of Xinjiang, it is not at all clear how many originated there and how many originally came from further west in Shaanxi and Gansu. Bai Yanhu himself was one of the leaders of the Shaanxi Hui insurrection, and with others he was forced out of Shaanxi into Gansu, from where he made his way to Russian Central Asia via Xinjiang. He died in 1882 in Bishkek, known as Frunze during the period of the USSR, and in 1982, the Soviet authorities held a memorial meeting to honour his centenary.³²

The Dungans are usually classified according to the dialect area that their forefathers came from and there are two major dialects spoken, the Gansu and Shaanxi. Most Gansu dialect speakers live in Kyrgyzstan while the Shaanxi group are concentrated in Kazakhstan. The Dungans refer to themselves as Hui, can speak varieties of Chinese which are recognisable as Gansu and Shaanxi dialects of the northern Chinese language group although some apparently claim that their language is completely different from that spoken in China. They are also Muslims by culture and tradition if not in terms of open everyday belief and behaviour and are clearly not Uyghurs, Kazakhs or Kyrgyz as they consciously distinguish themselves from

31 Dyer, Svetlana Rimsky-Korsakoff (1990–91) p 301–323. All Dungan words used in this article have been transcribed into *Hanyu pinyin* for consistency.

32 Chu (1966) p vii; HZJS p 44; Gao Zhanfu (1991) p 302–3.

their Turkic-speaking host communities.³³ There were, as has been shown, large communities of Hui people in both Shaanxi and Gansu, but Hui families had also migrated to Xinjiang and even today distinguish themselves according to their provincial origins.³⁴

The Dungan community do not have any deep attachment to their places of origin in China and educated Dungans recall the harsh treatment the Chinese had meted out to their forefathers. 'The general Dungan attitude to China and the Chinese is that China is not their motherland, but only the land where their ancestors, who were not Chinese to start with, lived, and that the Chinese are foreigners, an alien race.'³⁵ In their flight from the forces of the Qing, the Dungans have moved closer to their Central Asian roots than their relatives who remain in Shaanxi, Gansu, Ningxia and Xinjiang.

33 Dyer (1990-91) p 301-323.

34 There are Hui mosques in Urumqi designated as the Shaanxi mosque and the Qinghai mosque. According to the Imam of the Qinghai mosque, most of the congregation are descended from Hui people who moved to Urumqi from Qinghai. He himself had been born in Urumqi, but his father and grandfather had moved from Qinghai. (Interview March 23 1991).

35 Dyer (1990-1991) p 307.

Hui Communities in Early Twentieth Century China

For an account of the condition of China's Muslim communities in the early twentieth century, we are fortunate in having eye-witness evidence from a western source to complement information from the Chinese-language sources. An expedition led by Commandant the Viscount D'Ollone of the French army passed through China in 1906–9 collecting information on the Muslim communities of China, particularly in the southwest. Beginning in Yunnan, logically since this was one of the main French spheres of influence in China and is the province just north of France's colony, Vietnam, the expedition worked northwards through Sichuan, Gansu and Chinese Turkestan and gathered information on the size and status of the Muslim centres through which they passed. Members of the expedition photographed the people and buildings they encountered and collected documents in Chinese, Arabic and Persian on the history and religion of Muslims in China. Arabic and Persian linguists attached to the expedition identified and translated the documents. D'Ollone's eye-witness report on Muslim China in the final years of the empire provides a valuable first hand account of the Hui and is both a useful counterbalance to contemporary Chinese language records and a good starting point for twentieth century Hui history.¹

1 D'Ollone, Commandant *Recherches sur les Musulmans Chinois* Paris 1911. Not all of the historical analysis in the book stands up to modern research on the Chinese texts and there is much confusion about the different Islamic sects. Because the Hui feared reprisals from the Chinese authorities after the suppression of the uprisings of the late nineteenth century, it is possible that much was hidden from D'Ollone's team. Nevertheless it is a valuable source as a first hand account of the Hui communities against which to compare contemporary Chinese sources.

Yunnan

The Yunnan Muslim rising which lasted from 1855–1873 had left its mark on the communities that the D'Ollone expedition visited. Bitter at the carnage inflicted on them by the Qing regime and angry at the divisions in their own ranks that had contributed to it, the Hui in Yunnan were keeping their heads down. As a community, they gave the impression of being isolated and scattered. They appeared to have little contact with Muslims in the rest of China or abroad. Mosques were said to operate independently, with no network of Ahongs and no religious hierarchy. In other words the existence of *menhuan* was being denied and it is generally accepted that the Sufi tradition is far weaker in Yunnan than in the northwest. The powerful Muslim families of the province had been virtually wiped out in the suppression of the rising and the remainder had been widely dispersed, out of the sight of government officials.

Nevertheless the Hui community was able to maintain the *hajj* tradition with at least thirty pilgrims travelling to Mecca each year through Burma and Vietnam. This route had become popular since the building of the railway link in the upper reaches of the Red River valley in northern Vietnam so that pilgrims could now avoid the roundabout route that took them along the West River (*Xijiang*) to Guangzhou and out of China by sea. Strangely, the Hui in Yunnan claimed to have no links with either Mecca or Medina and in fact were more familiar with the latter than the former. Turks and Arabs were regular visitors to Muslim communities in Sichuan at this time, providing a valued link with the wider world of Islam and it seems unlikely that the long established Yunnan Muslim community was left out. It is more likely that contact was maintained in secret as the Hui in Yunnan were still afraid of the wrath of government troops.²

Local Muslims estimated that the total Hui population at the time of the expedition was between 200,000 and 250,000, a figure well below the millions that D'Ollone and his team had expected. Many towns and villages had no Muslims at all. The low population was a result of the extermination of whole communities of Muslims at the end of the rising and their replacement by non-Muslim Chinese from other provinces, a policy that the Qing and its successor governments were also to put into practice in Xinjiang, Mongolia and Tibet.

2 D'Ollone p 3–5.

In defeat, the Muslims avoided proselytising and they attracted few converts. Some troops serving under Muslim commanders converted as did the daughters of Han families who married Hui men, but this did not greatly increase the Muslim population.

The greatest concentration of Muslims that the expedition came across was in Zhaotong prefecture in the northeast of Yunnan, bordering on Sichuan and Guizhou. The Hui communities there had not taken part in the rising and had been spared by the Qing armies, and the 8–10,000 Muslims made up between a third and a quarter of the total population of the region. In Yunnan *xian* (Kunming), the 6–8,000 Muslims had five mosques and there was an Islamic centre at Dazhuang to the north of Mengzi, which, the D'Ollone team reported, was important out of all proportion to its size. Out of a total of five hundred families, only thirty were not Muslims and the town had become a minor centre for pilgrimages. It was also the home town of a large number of Ahongs, officials and army officers, an interesting example of local specialisation in a Muslim context. D'Ollone speculated on whether it might be the centre of an Islamic secret society.³

Nothing about the external appearance of the mosques they encountered in Yunnan struck D'Ollone as being remarkably different from the Buddhist temples that the expedition came across, although the mihrab and minbar replaced altars and effigies. The arrangement of the interior of the mosques conformed then, as it does now, with established practice throughout the Islamic world, but D'Ollone noted the presence of tablets wishing the emperor long life that were placed in a prominent position in front of the entrance to the mosque, reminding China's Muslims of the government's view of their primary loyalty. There were no minarets from which the muezzin could sing out the call to prayer, the call being made instead in the courtyard of the mosque, with no chanting.

Incense was also burned in the mosques, a mark of the effect that long exposure to the Chinese tradition had on the Muslims. With the exception of a few Ahongs who opposed it, the Muslims of Yunnan burned incense in front of the ancestral tablets in their own homes. There was no evidence of circumcision being practised but since it was the rule elsewhere in Chinese Islam, D'Ollone could not rule it out. The Muslims all had an Arabic name as well as their Chinese one, but the Chinese name was more commonly used and D'Ollone

3 D'Ollone, p 6–7.

suspected that many of the congregation could hardly remember their Arabic names, although the Ahongs and other learned believers could. D'Ollone searched in vain for differences in dress and features to enable him to distinguish the Hui and the Han. In dress he found few apart from the white cap. In features, he felt that he could spot Arab blood in some of the Muslims, but accepted that western China was such a melting pot of Hans, Tibetans, Mongols and Central Asian Turks and Persians that these features could be detected among non-Muslims as well.

The spread and maintenance of religious beliefs was affected by the lack of a hierarchy or organisation of Ahongs who were elected by an financially dependent on their congregations. there were no Muslim colleges and not even any madrassa at the more elementary level. Muslim education was simply the instruction of a disciple by a master with no organisation to ensure orthodoxy. The level of knowledge of Arabic among the Muslim elite seems to have been fairly high but the majority of the Hui population knew hardly any. In the past, the Qur'an had been printed in Yunnan and the plates were still in existence when the D'Ollone expedition passed through. Because few Muslims were able to read it was thought more economical to acquire copies from pilgrims returning from Mecca rather than print a new edition.

D'Ollone and his team heard legends about the introduction of Islam by an uncle of the Prophet Muhammed. Oral tradition handed down through generations of Ahongs and the documentary record concurred in attributing the bringing of Islam to Yunnan to the Yuan official Sayyid Adjall Shams al-din and his son Nasruddin. This account of the arrival of large numbers of Muslim strangers seemed to them more consistent with the concept that the Hui have of themselves as a separate ethnic group than the idea of a slow and gradual process of converting the Han.⁴ This early contact between westerners and the Hui at least began to reveal the true origins of the Muslims in China.

Sichuan

D'Ollone noted the problems of communication faced by the Muslim communities of Yunnan and Sichuan and remarked on how few Muslims his expedition encountered. The first they met were north of

4 D'Ollone p 8-16.

Dechang in villages on the way to Ningyuan. Many of the villages were predominantly Muslim, the main one being Gaozaoba with two hundred Muslim families amounting to between 1,000 and 1,500 people in all. Ningyuan, the regional capital, had a mosque and 100 Muslim families. Most, if not all, the Muslim families of this part of Sichuan were the descendants of refugees from Yunnan who had fled after the failure of the rebellion led by Du Wenxiu and the capture of Dali to escape reprisals from imperial troops.

D'Ollone estimated that there were 400 mosques in the whole of Sichuan, 12 in the capital Chengdu alone. Local sources gave the total Muslim population as 400,000 in 70,000 families. The role played by the Sichuan community in Chinese Islam was a significant one. Affluence and the education this allowed led to the development of an important Islamic publishing industry in Chengdu. Very nearly all the books on Islam that the D'Ollone expedition collected in China were published in Chengdu. The ahongs were chosen for their knowledge of Arabic and many read and wrote it well and several also knew Persian. D'Ollone calculated that out of the hundred or so ahongs in Chengdu, perhaps forty were genuinely learned.⁵

Songpan in the north of present day Sichuan's Aba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture is a town in the border region between China and Tibet that is a mixture of linguistic, religious and ethnic groups. When the D'Ollone mission visited it in 1906, it was a thriving centre with a population of about 10,000. Of these 4,000 were Muslims and the three mosques between them had a hundred ahong. The Muslims had a monopoly of the trade in tea with the Mongols and Tibetans, a monopoly that had been granted one hundred and fifty years previously to Ma Yumin of Chengdu and maintained by his descendants who in 1910 shared the trade with four other Muslim families. In Songpan, three Salars, acting as agents for Gansu firms were the link between the Muslims traders of Gansu and Chengdu. Trading links with Tibetans had not led to conversions to Islam and the D'Ollone missions discovered only one Tibetan who said he was a convert and he only went to the mosque twice a year, still he knew all the Buddhist prayers and had made a pilgrimage to all the lamaseries.

The expedition detected little conflict between the *Gedimu* and the Sufi orders at that time. Interviewed by D'Ollone's team, the ahongs all claimed to be *Gedimu* although they admitted that their congre-

5 D'Ollone 205-9.

gations also took part in the worship of Sufi saints in the tomb cults and did not seem greatly opposed to it. This is consistent with contemporary evidence that although Sufism did penetrate Yunnan, particularly with the Jahriyya sect in the late eighteenth century, Sufi orders had far less influence in southwestern China than they did in the northwestern regions of Gansu and Ningxia.⁶

Approximately, one kilometre north of Songpan, the expedition visited a tomb which contained the remains of an Ahong born in Medina who had come to Songpan in 1666 by way of Shaanxi and whose prayers were credited with end of a devastating drought five years later. He died in 1679 and a tomb was erected in his honour. This was destroyed in 1861 when Tibetans captured the town and a new one erected by subscription.⁷

Religious doctrine in the Muslim community in Sichuan in 1910 was apparently orthodox, but religious practices were lax. The ban on alcohol was not enforced and the prohibition on the use of tobacco even less so. In the mosques there was little provision for ritual washing before prayers, Friday prayers attracted few of the faithful and on other days the congregations were even smaller. Many Muslims burned incense in front of ancestral tablets in the same way that their Han counterparts had always done and Muslim officials and army officers did not seem to find any incongruity in taking part in ceremonies to honour Confucius. However, the D'Ollone team noted that there was strict adherence to the prohibition on eating pork which they pointed out was remarkable in a country in which pig meat plays such an important part in the national diet. Slaughter regulations for other meats were strictly adhered to.

'The children all attend the mosque school and the Muslims are so proud of their faith that they have renounced their own nationality: the Han are distinguished from the Hui as if they were different races and the Hui are counted among non-Chinese peoples such as the Miao, Lolo, Sifan, and Tatars.'

Sichuan mosques appeared to the D'Ollone mission to be different from those they had seen in Yunnan where the minaret was unknown. Sichuan mosques had minarets but they were not used for the call to prayer because of an official ban. The *muezzin* instead would call the congregation to prayer in the courtyard of the mosque. The team

6 Jianping Wang (1996) p 174-181

7 D'Ollone p 223-7.

noted that some of the *ahongs* wore white robes for prayer and all of the Muslims attending the mosque wore the white cap, held by a [turban] which could be of any colour. It was not until they reached Chengdu that the expedition first came into contact with what was then still known to non-Muslim Chinese as the New Religion (*xinjiao*). It was described to them as the cult of the tombs and a trend firmly opposed by the *ahongs* of the Old Religion (*laojiao*).⁸

Hui and the Revolution of 1911

The Manchu rule of China and the Chinese Empire itself finally came to an end in the Revolution of 1911 which began with the mutiny of the New Army unit stationed at Wuchang (part of the modern city of Wuhan) on October 10.⁹ As one province after another declared itself independent and seceded from the Qing government in Beijing, the empire disintegrated. Shaanxi was one of the earliest provinces to secede and Hui troops were prominent in the New Army there as they were in Sichuan and Henan. In the city of Ningxia, now known as Yinchuan, the local branch of the *Tongmenghui* 同盟会 (Sun Yat-sen's United League) and the Elder Brother Society, the *Gelaohui* 哥老会 staged a rising, but failed to overthrow the Qing officials in the region.

Sun Yat-sen, the inspiration for the republican revolution, although destined never to be its leader or President of the Republic, had included in his plans for the new order which he set out in *Sanmin zhuyi* 三民主义 (The Three People's Principles) ideas of racial equality *minzu pingdeng* 民族平等 and the common harmony or republic of the five ethnic groups of China *wuzu gonghe* 五族共和. These proposals were popular with the Hui but like so much else in Sun's programme, they were never implemented and after his death in 1925, only lip-service was paid to them. Part of the problem was the definition of the five ethnic groups. The five names were Han, Manchu, Mongol, Hui and Tibetan. There was little difficulty in agreeing on the first three and the last, although modern ethnographers would argue that not only are these crude ethnic classifications but they also leave out almost all of the smaller ethnic groups in China. A major problem was agreeing on the membership of the Hui category. The term Hui has been used at different times to

8 D'Ollone p 209–217.

9 This date, the Double Tenth is commemorated as the date of the foundation of the Republic of China and still celebrated on Taiwan.

mean members of the Muslim ethnic group of mixed Chinese and Central Asian ancestry and sometimes to mean simply Muslim as in the term *Huijiao* 回教, Islam, which has fallen into disuse in China. Warlord and Guomindang politicians used it to refer to Muslims in general and primarily to the Turkic Muslims of Xinjiang. There was no recognition of the existence of the Hui as a separate ethnic group.¹⁰

Chiang Kai-shek was not prepared to accept that China had different ethnic minorities. He believed that China consisted only of one race, the Han, and that all the others were subsidiary branches. Even some Hui members of China's elite, such as Bai Chongxi, went along with this and agreed that Hui were just Han people who had accepted Islam, using the analogy of Christianity and Buddhism, whose followers were not considered to belong to distinct ethnic groups. Hui groups were not allowed to use the term *Huimin* 回民 (Hui nationality or Hui people) in the names of their organisations or publications, but were obliged to replace it with *Huijiao* 回教 (Hui religion, Muslim).¹¹ These attitudes gained the Guomindang no support at all among the Hui people as a whole and when the Chinese Communist Party arrived in their heartland in the 1930s with what appeared to be a completely different philosophy, there was a ready pool of potential supporters in the Hui community.

A Hui Renaissance at the End of the Empire?

Hui intellectuals were active in many of the political and literary movements that arose at the end of the Qing dynasty and in the early years of the Republic and took advantage of the new freedoms to explore their Islamic identity. A leading Hui scholar, Yang Huaizhong of Yinchuan, writing in the 1990s, has gone so far as to describe this as a period of a 'new cultural renaissance among Chinese Muslims' and the 'Fourth Upsurgence [sic] of Islamic Culture in Chinese History,' the previous three having been the aftermath of the Tang dynasty, the Mongol conquests and the education and translation programmes of the Ming and Qing dynasties described in previous chapters.¹²

10 Bai Shouyi (1982) p 40–41.

11 Bodde (September 11, 1946) p 283; HZJS p 57–8. For Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek's views on China's ethnic minorities, see Heberer (1989) p 18.

12 Yang Huaizhong, Muhammad Usiar 'The Four Upsurgences of Islamic Culture in Chinese History' JIMMA Volume 16, Number 1, January 1996, p 9–20.

Numerous newspapers, journals and associations were created specifically for the Hui people. For example, Ding Baochen of the Hui community in Beijing founded a newspaper the Muslim Patriot *Zhengzong aiguo bao* 正宗爱国报 which he edited and used to attack the policies of the warlord government in Beijing. His paper was suppressed by Yuan Shikai.

Islamic education once again became a priority for the Hui population throughout China and many communities raised funds to build religious schools. In Zhenjiang, a Yangzi river port downstream from Nanjing, an East Asian Muslim Educational Congress *Dong Ya Mumin jiaoyu zonghui* 东亚穆民教育总会 was established by one Tong Cong in 1906. It set up a Muslim school for the Hui children of Zhenjiang and began to produce its own textbooks. The following year, Wang Kuan founded the *Huiwen shifan xuetang* 回文师范学堂 in Beijing, a training college for teachers in the *madrasas*. A Muslim primary school was opened in Shaoyang, one of the centres of the Hui community in Hunan province. Teacher training colleges to generate the next generation of madrasa teachers were established in Shanghai, Ningxia and Wanxian, and the *madrasa* curriculum benefited from the import of copies of the Qur'an and other religious texts from abroad. In 1912, the first ever complete translation of the Qur'an into Chinese by a Chinese Muslim, Wang Jinzhai was published and works on Islamic philosophy and the history of Islam in China also appeared.¹³

From the beginning of the Republic, Muslims were able to belong openly to a number of Islamic associations which had a nationwide membership and a branches throughout the country. Derk Bodde who had studied the Muslim community in China as part of his war service with the United States Office of Strategic Studies and Office of War Information concluded that all of these organisations were 'indicative of increasing consciousness and a feeling of solidarity.'¹⁴

In 1907, a group of Hui students in Tokyo organised a Returned Students from the East Muslim Education Society *Liudong qingzhen jiaoyu hui* 留东清真教育会. Many students from China went to Japan

¹³ Yang Huaizhong (1996), p 17.

¹⁴ Bodde (September 11, 1946) p 283. Derk Bodde was Associate Professor of Chinese at the University of Pennsylvania at the time and is better known to sinologists for his translations from the Chinese of the works of the historian of philosophy Feng Youlan and his *Peking Diary* which recorded the entry of the Chinese Communist Party into Beijing in 1949.

to study in the declining years of the Qing dynasty as Japan under its rapidly modernising and expansionist government of the Meiji period was seen as the model for the future in East Asia. This group included Muslims from China and the Returned Students from the East Muslim Education Society began with thirty six members from fourteen provinces and included students of engineering, medicine, railway technology, commerce, political economy and military science. These were seen as the most advanced areas of study at the time and it is striking that Hui students were involved in all of these, given the Han Chinese stereotype of the backward and uneducated Hui only interested in petty trading. The Society founded its own journal in 1908, the *Muslim Awakening* (*Xing Hui pian*) 兴回篇. This encouraged Muslims in Yunnan to publish their own journal the *Yunnan Islamic Monthly* (*Yunnan qingzhen yuebao*) 云南清真月报 in 1915, but this lasted only for one year and there were other examples of short lived Muslim journals published in Beijing and Yunnan. According to the editors of *Huizu jianshi* 回族简史, altogether over seventy different titles appeared. The proliferation of journals, schools and associations is evidence of a revival of Hui consciousness across provincial boundaries and the need to build modern nationwide institutions to represent the Hui.¹⁵ Derk Bodde maintains that between the 1911 Revolution and the Japanese invasion of 1937, some one hundred Chinese language journals for Muslims were published. Of these, thirty four were still being published at the time of the invasion. A third of the total emanated from Beijing, Shanghai was the second most important source and Nanjing the Ming dynasty centre of Islamic theology came third. Bodde also pointed out that in spite of this proliferation, only a small proportion of the Chinese Muslim community would have had direct access to them as the largest circulation periodicals printed only three to four thousand copies.¹⁶ The material would, however have been diffused more widely by the Ahongs in sermons and in the *madrasas*.

Of all the organisations that emerged in this period, the Chinese Islamic Mutual Progress Association *Zhongguo huijiao jujin hui* 中国回教俱进会 was probably the most significant. It was formed in 1912 by Wang Haoran who had studied Islam in the Middle East and then returned to Beijing. The headquarters of the association were in Beijing and branches were established at provincial and county level.

15 Bai Shouyi (1982) p 41–44; HZJS p 55.

16 Bodde (September 11, 1946) p 282.

By 1923, the number of branches created had reportedly risen to three thousand.¹⁷

The Hui and the Japanese in the 1930s

The eminent Hui historian, Bai Shouyi, writing in 1937, complained that in spite of the size of China's Muslim population (and he quoted the figure of fifty million current at the time although later to be much disputed) there was no institute that coordinated research work on Islamic culture. He protested that Chinese who wanted to learn about their Muslim neighbours had to read academic articles and travel writing by Americans and Europeans. While in the past, he argued, this may have been merely an embarrassment and an inconvenience, in the face of the Japanese threat it had become an urgent concern. This was not just for the sake of pure academic research but to help in the understanding of China's frontier question and the resolution of conflicts between different ethnic groups in China which were being manipulated by the Japanese.

On the academic side, he argued for the importance of Muslim culture as a culture drawn from Greek, Persian and Indian roots that had taken its own distinctive form in China and that linked China with Muslims in the Arab, Turkish and Persian speaking worlds. He pointed out that Chinese products such as silk, tea and porcelain had enriched middle eastern culture and that Arab perfumes and medicines had been incorporated into Chinese civilization. He emphasised the fact that many of China's key frontier areas such as Xinjiang, Gansu, Ningxia and Yunnan had significant Muslim populations and their culture, belief and religious organisation were far stronger than their co-religionists in the east of China. Treated properly, he said, they could be a defensive wall, treated badly they might hinder the work of national defence. To know how to treat them properly it was necessary to understand their belief and culture. Although the Hui on the frontier did not necessarily have a weaker sense of national identity than the Han or the Hui in the east, they did place a high premium on justice and loyalty, and, he implied should not be taken for granted. Local traditions of self-defence, based on the mosques and led by the Ahongs could also be utilised for national defence. Bai Shouyi also pointed to the fact that China's western neighbours were largely Muslim and argued for the need to utilise

¹⁷ Bodde (September 11, 1946) p 283.

Islamic studies to reduce tensions between the Hui and the Han which had resulted in such violence throughout the Qing dynasty and which still existed. As a Hui himself, Bai Shouyi seems to be referring to Chinese-speaking Hui Muslims for much of his article, but many of the points he made apply to the Uyghurs and other Muslims of China.¹⁸ Many of his ideas, although not taken up at the time, inspired the revival of Hui studies in China in the 1980s at a time when once again there was a perceived need for some acceptance of the connection between the Hui and China's western, Muslim, neighbours.

Japanese politicians and the military began to take an interest in the Muslim population of China towards the end of the nineteenth century when Russo-Japanese rivalry was beginning to develop and the Muslims of northwestern China and Xinjiang in particular were seen as a possible bulwark against Russian expansion.¹⁹ In practice, direct Japanese influence was confined to the Muslim communities of north-eastern and eastern China with whom they had direct contact. However there were a number of Muslims among the large numbers of young Chinese who went to Japan to study in the early decades of the twentieth century.²⁰

After the Japanese had invaded in 1937, they set up an All China Muslim League. To counter this, the National Government of Chiang Kai-shek lent its support to the Chinese Islamic National Salvation Federation, which was formed after a mass meeting in Hankou in 1938 of Muslim delegates from all over China. The Federation was chaired by General Omar Bai Chongxi, Minister of National Defence in the National Government and probably the most influential Hui Muslim in China at the time. General Bai drafted 1500 Muslim youths from north-western China into the Guilin Branch of the Central Military Academy and the government agreed to develop Islamic studies in the universities. Although these policies attracted a degree of support from the Muslims of China for the Guomindang, there were still complaints of under-representation in the People's Political Council, which had one Muslim member out of a total of 240, and other government bodies.²¹

18 Bai Shouyi 'Lun sheli Huijiao wenhua yanjiu jiguan zhi xuyao' (On the need for the establishment of an Islamic cultural institute) *Shenbao* 28/2/1937, in ZYSCZ, P 916-919.

19 Bodde (September 11, 1946) p 281.

20 For Japanese activities among Muslims in Manchuria in the early 1930s and south of the Great Wall after the invasion of 1937, see Bodde (October 9, 1946) and Bodde (October 23, 1946).

21 Bodde (September 11, 1946) p 283-4.

Chinese Muslims in the 1920s and 1930s had the opportunity to develop links with the rest of the Islamic world which had been difficult to maintain during the Qing dynasty. The most important means of maintaining these links was, as always, the *Hajj* pilgrimage. According to Derk Bodde, 'Prior to the 1920s only a handful ever made the pilgrimage in any given year, but in the eleven years preceding 1934 no less than 834 Chinese pilgrims performed the *Hajj*, despite the fact that the round trip from Hankow to Mecca by steamer cost approximately C\$1,000 – a sum prohibitive for any but a wealthy Muslim. By 1937, just before the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war, the numbers had so increased that 170 pilgrims sailed from Shanghai for Mecca on one steamer.'²²

The Hui and the Chinese Communist Party

During 1935, the 25th Red Army under the command of Xu Haidong, immortalised as the Red Potter in Edgar Snow's *Red Star over China* was moving northwards through Shaanxi province.²³ In August it moved over into the Xiji and Guyuan regions of present day southern Ningxia which have a high concentration of Hui people and in October passed into Hui areas of Gansu. Red Army units were instructed to send representatives to Hui areas to explain the reasons behind their move north and their intention of resisting the coming Japanese invasion. Only if the local leaders agreed were they supposed to set up camp in the villages. They were also told to explain their policies of racial equality, their opposition to Han chauvinism and the exploitation of Hui people by Han officials and their support for the freedom of religious belief. The Red Army soldiers were forbidden to enter mosques or eat pork while in the Hui areas and instructed not to destroy Muslim scriptures. It is difficult to assess how genuine this consideration for Hui sensibilities was, but there appears to have been a feeling that the CCP policies were more likely to favour the Hui than those of the Guomindang and some young Hui men joined the Red Army.²⁴

The attitude taken by the CCP to the Hui when they first came across sizeable Hui communities was vital, not only for the Hui but

22 Bodde (September 11, 1946) p 284.

23 Snow, Edgar *Red Star over China* Gollancz, London 1937 p 305–318. Snow was one of the first journalists to give serious coverage to the emerging Chinese Communist Party and his first-hand account has become an important contemporary source in English for the Yan'an period of the CCP.

24 HZJS p 72–78; Snow (1937) 327–332.

for ethnic minority communities in China in general. Many of the policies adopted to integrate minority areas into China while at least appearing to provide some autonomy owe their origin to the negotiations between the CCP and the Hui in the nineteen thirties.

One of the most important policies was the designation of areas as autonomous regions. The first use of the term autonomous region or autonomous government by the CCP in relation to an ethnic minority administration came long before the establishment of the People's Republic of China. The formation of the Yuhai County Hui Autonomous Government was announced on October 20 1936 when sections of the Long March of the Communist Party's Workers and Peasants Red Army passed through the predominantly Hui areas of southern Ningxia on their odyssey which was to take them finally to Yan'an. The administration was established after over two months work and the meeting to announce the formation of the Autonomous Government which was held in the Great Mosque in Tongxin, was attended by two hundred official delegates and five hundred other participants. An autonomous government committee of thirteen was elected with Ma Hexiang as Chairman. The government only lasted seven months but it became an important symbol of Communist Party intentions towards the Hui and the 1936 wooden tablet announcing the formation of the autonomous government still hangs outside the mosque.²⁵

The Revolutionary Military Committee of the Chinese Communist Party *Zhongge junhui* 中革军会 announced its intention of helping Hui and Mongol communities in northern China to establish independent governments. This was to ensure that ethnic minority groups would support the CCP in its struggle against the Japanese invasion rather than succumb to Japanese blandishments for quasi-independent states under Japanese control after the model of Manzhouguo, occupied by Japan in 1931 and declared a separate independent state under the last emperor of the Qing dynasty, Aisin Gioro Pu Yi in 1932. Japan had plans to create a similar structure in Inner Mongolia and some Japanese also had notions of constructing a Hui or a combined Muslim state in northwestern China. To ensure the support of the Muslims, the CCP had first to counter the propaganda being spread by the GMD authorities and warlords. There were the usual rumours that the Communists planned to collectivise marriage as well as property, but they also claimed that it

25 *Dangdai Zhongguo de Ningxia* p 35; personal observation 1992.

was CCP policy to eradicate Islam and that Ahongs would be boiled alive.²⁶

Ma Zhongying

The career of Ma Zhongying is an interesting example of the path followed by a successful member of the Hui elite in the twentieth century who did not follow a religious calling. He also illustrates the complex relationship between Hui Muslims and Muslims of other ethnic groups in Xinjiang.

Ma Zhongying who probably lived between 1910 and 1937 was a Hui from Hezhou (today known as Linxia) in south-western Gansu. He was the fifth of the Five Ma *Wu Ma* 五馬 warlords of Gansu, Qinghai and Ningxia and the five were related to each other. Ma Zhongying, like many Hui from wealthy families, chose a military career and fought against the warlord Feng Yuxiang's troops when they invaded Gansu in 1925. He took Hezhou after a siege but was dismissed for exceeding his authority and based himself in Xining in Qinghai. Ma Zhongying had a brief flirtation with the Guomindang and enrolled in the Military Academy in Nanjing in 1929. He stayed there for a short time only and then returned to north-western Gansu to build up his military power base. When the 1931 Uyghur rising took place in Hami (Kumul), Ma was effectively in control of the region and he intervened unsuccessfully in Hami in July. He withdrew to Gansu and made a second attempt to establish his control over Xinjiang in 1933, battling against Sheng Shicai who ruled the region with the support of the Soviet Union. The Uyghur nationalist rebels were fighting to establish the Turk-Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan in Kashghar and when this collapsed in 1934 Ma attempted to form an administration, restating his loyalty to the Nanjing government of Chiang Kaishek. However the USSR continued to support Sheng Shicai and at some point during 1934, Ma Zhongying left China. His fate is still a mystery, but death in the hands of Stalin's officials seems the most probable outcome.²⁷

Between January 1939 and June 1941, there were three large scale armed insurrections in the Haiyuan and Guyuan regions of what is now southern Ningxia, directed against the Guomindang authorities.

26 Zhong Kan, Chen Mingyou, Wu Zhongli *Ningxia shihua* Ningxia renmin chubanshe, 1988 p 384-5.

27 Forbes (1986) p 52-127; Gao Zhanfu (1991) p 359-368.

The first was in response to demands for military conscripts and taxes and an incident in which Guomindang troops hung pork from the wall of a mosque. All three risings were put down with force.²⁸

28 *Dangdai Zhongguo de Ningxia* p 47–49.

Sects and Sufism (1): The Islamic Background

This chapter and the two that follow explore the diverse organisations and institutions which have transmitted and preserved Islam in China. These include orthodox *Gedimu* Islam, the *Yihewani*, the seemingly endless profusion of varieties of Sufism which served as a parallel Islam and helped sustain the faith during times of persecution, the growth of Sufi networks in a distinctive Chinese pattern known as *menhuan* and the uniquely Chinese Xidaotang. Although this book is not intended primarily as a study of the religious belief and religious organisation of the Hui, it is quite clear that for many Muslims in China, as elsewhere in the Muslim world, the focus of their life has been, and in many cases still is, the Islamic order of which they are members, and that this is intimately connected with family relationships. Membership of an Islamic order is not just a question of religious belief but an expression of individual and family identity. No attempt has been made to cover all the sects and Sufi orders comprehensively. The main groupings are outlined and selected groups examined in detail to indicate the impact of religious organisations on the life of the Hui people.

In spite of the aim of religious harmony in Islam, one of the characteristics of Muslim communities in China, as in other parts of the Islamic world is their tendency to schism and sectarianism. Other religions, including the closely related Christianity and Judaism (considered favourably by Muslims as fellow religions of the book), are hardly immune from this.¹ The professed reasons for division are

1 Emerging from the eighteenth century Emin Minaret in Turfan, also known as the Su Gong Ta (The Minaret of Prince Suleiman) in March 1991, I was struck by the sight of a man and woman on a donkey cart against the background of a dry hillside and Sufi tombs. Often in Xinjiang and the rest of Muslim northwest China, the panorama is more Holy Land than China.

either doctrinal or connected with the interpretation of correct religious practice, but a detailed examination of the emergence of sects within Chinese Islam reveals a complex interplay of religious, personal, family and social factors. Because conflict between individuals or groups of followers of different sects has often been behind the intercommunal violence that has blighted the Muslim communities of China, an understanding of their origins and differences is essential in understanding the history of the Hui people. In northwestern China in particular, after their own immediate family, it is their sect or order with which most Hui people have tended to identify and their connection with a sect has often determined their fate. Membership of a sect or Sufi order could have a profound effect on the everyday lives of Hui people, their employment prospects and standard of living. Mosques and other Islamic organisations owned land and businesses and generally preferred to employ their own followers.

By convention, there are four major divisions within Chinese Islam, divisions which the Chinese authorities in the twentieth century have characterised as *jiaopai* 教派, religious factions or sects. The oldest and most orthodox of these groupings is the *Gedimu* 格迪目, the name being derived from the Arabic *al-qadim*, meaning the ancient. The *Yihewani* 伊赫瓦尼 is the Chinese equivalent of the Arabic *Ikhwan* 'brotherhood' as in the *Ikhwan al-Muslimin* or Muslim Brotherhood although the Chinese term predates this and can probably be traced back to eighteenth century Wahhabism. The third is a group made up of branches of Sufi brotherhoods or *menhuan* 门宦 the origins of which can be traced to teachers outside China, primarily in the Arabian peninsula and Central Asia. Finally, the *Xidaotang* or Hall of the Western Pathway is a sect which appears to be unique to China. The *Gedimu*, *Yihewani* and Sufi brotherhoods are considered in this chapter and in the one which follows, the Hall of the Western Pathway in more detail in chapter nine.²

The question of the influence of Shi'a Islam on China has been raised frequently by both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars. Shi'ites are followers of the Party of Ali (*Shi'a 'Ali*), who was assassinated in 661 and they differ from Sunni Muslims in their view of the

2 For detailed descriptions of Hui religious organisations during the period of the Republic, see Dietmar Federlein *Die Religiösen Gruppierungen der muslimischen Hui-Nationalität in Nordwest-China unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Zeit der Republik China (1912-1949)* Ph.D dissertation Friedrich-Alexander University of Erlangen-Nürnberg 1997.

succession to the Prophet Muhammad and other matters of authority and law. It is generally agreed that all Muslims within the borders of China are followers of the majority and mainstream Sunni tradition of Islam with only a small number of Tajiks in the Pamir mountains adhering to the Shi'a rite (in their case, the Isma'ili branch). However, some Hui scholars have argued that the influence that the Persian-speaking regions of Central Asia have had on Sunni groups within China has meant that these groups often have a Shi'ite flavour in their ceremonies, in the use of Persian religious terminology and texts in Persian in sermons and in the veneration of Ali, cousin of the Prophet Muhammad and the first Shi'ite imam, and Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet who married Ali.³

Mosque Organisation

In the early years of Islam in China, there were few Muslims, so solidarity probably militated against sectarianism. Muslims were simply Muslims and although they could retrospectively be designated as *Gedimu* to distinguish them from the revivalist and reforming sects that were to arise later, at the time that name meant nothing.

The names given by Muslims in China to their mosques and the officials who ran them have changed over the centuries and have overlapped at times with the appellations for synagogues and churches. In the Tang period, mosques were known as *litang* 礼堂 (halls of ceremony or worship), in the Song dynasty they were *libaitang* 礼拜堂 (halls of worship) and by the Yuan period, the most common designation was probably *libaisi* 礼拜寺 (temples of worship) although there were considerable regional variation. The most common, but by no means the only, name for mosques in modern times, *qingzhensi* 清真寺 (temples of pure truth) probably emerged in the Ming period (1368–1644).⁴

By the Ming dynasty, the administration of some of the older mosques on the southeast coast had developed into a hereditary system. In Quanzhou, for example, the main mosque, the *qingjingsi* 清净寺 (Pure and Clear Temple) was controlled by Shesihan Xialuhanding for over fifty years from 1312, and on his death, he was succeeded by his son Xia Ruanji (his name compressed into the three

3 Feng Jinyuan 冯今源 *Zhongguo de Yisilanjiao* 中国的伊斯兰教 (China's Islam) Yinchuan (1991) p 77–80.

4 Ma Tong (1983), p 108.

characters of traditional Chinese surnames). He was in turn succeeded by Xia Yanguo and Xia Dongsheng and the administration of the mosque remained in the hands of the Xia family for three centuries until the end of the sixteenth century.

In Didao (later known as Lintao) and Hezhou (Linxia) in southwestern Gansu, a three man system *sandao zhangjiao* 三道掌教 of mosque management that had evolved in the twelfth or thirteenth century was adopted and was handed down from generation to generation. The system relied on three people: the Imam (*Yimamu*) who was responsible for leading the prayers; the khatib (*haituibu*) who was in charge of the administration of Islamic law and preached the sermon at Friday prayers and the muezzin (*mazhen*) who called the faithful to prayer. This three man system was usually hereditary; for example in the Qisi mosque, the earliest one built in the Bafang area of Linxia in southwest Gansu, the khatibs were always from the Qi lineage. Gradually, the power of the triumvirate extended beyond the mosque and into the community.⁵

When Sufism spread throughout China in the late Qing period, a form of organisation known as the *menhuan*, equivalent to the Arabic *silsila*, chain or orders, emerged. The leaders of the orders, the *jiaozhu* 教主 or *shaykhs* (to use the Arabic term) had strict control over their members and developed a network of *reyisi* ra'is, leaders, and *muleside* murshid or advisers, appointed by the *shaykh* and were usually drawn from among his relatives to administer the dozens of parishes in a given area. Some of the appointed leaders in turn established their own branch orders and these also became hereditary.

In the nineteenth century, when the Wahhabi fundamentalist movement that was to emerge as the dominant force in Islam in Saudi Arabia spread to China, the hierarchical *Haiyi* system made its appearance.⁶ Each *Haiyi* mosque had jurisdiction over a number of lesser mosques, and the *zhangjiao* 掌教 or leading Imam of that mosque supervised the Imams of the smaller mosques, formulated religious law and dealt with civil disputes. In Qinghai, this was

5 Ma Tong (1983), p 108–112.

6 Chinese sources refer to this Wahhabism as *Yihewani* (Ikhwan). This predates the Muslim Brotherhood al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn which was not founded until 1928. The name *Yihewani* is the Chinese for *Ikhwan* (Arabic 'brotherhood' or 'brethren') which has been used of all the fundamentalist groups deriving their inspiration from Muhammed Ibn al-Wahhab who died in 1792. Ibn Wahhab's austere interpretation of the Qur'an combined with his anti-Ottoman Arab nationalism was the driving force behind the Wahabbi revolt led by Ibn Saud in 1802 and the movement which led eventually to the creation of Saudi Arabia.

known as the *Hazui* (more usually *Gazui* or *Kazui* in other parts of China) system in which the Imam, Khatib (here the *Atibu*) and Muezzin were supervised by a *Hazui* who ruled on religio-legal matters and ensured that the correct procedure was adopted at religious ceremonies. He also acted as the chief judge of the religious court. In Xunhua, which was later to become a hotbed of religious unrest, and other areas of Qinghai province bordering on Gansu province, the *Hazui* system was combined with the existing post of *tusi* 土司, the name given to local headmen in the border areas when they were absorbed in to the Qing administrative structure. This was particularly the case among the Turkic speaking Salar people, neighbours of the Gansu Hui, so that Salar headmen were also the *Hazui* and were used by the Qing government to control the Salars.

In the late Qing period, the organisation of mosques in northwest China underwent great changes with the emergence of a post which was known to insiders as the Director of Studies (*xuedong*) 学董 and to outsiders as the village headman (*xiangyue*) 乡约. This is an interesting example of the dual roles which Hui people have played, simultaneously holding posts of civil and a religious authority. In southeastern Gansu after 1784, each parish had a Director of Studies who managed the finances of the mosque and arbitrated in minor civil disputes and religious questions. Below the Director of Studies was the Ahong or Imam presiding over religious activities, a *xianglao* 乡老 or village elder who assisted the Director and recited the scriptures with the Ahong, and a *muzhewa* (*qinza*) (mujahwani) who was responsible mainly for the maintenance of the mosque. This effect of this change was to move the control of the mosque from religious professionals to landowners and the wealthier farmers. The Sufi orders with their independent organisations were able to take advantage of this shift to strengthen their position as a parallel structure of Islam in China.⁷

Gedimu

Gedimu is the Chinese version of the Arabic *al qadim*, meaning 'the ancient' and is the name used to refer to the original form of Islam to be brought into China and to the conservative and orthodox tradition that sought to preserve the faith in that original form, resisting novelty and heterodoxy of any kind, particularly Sufism. It was known in the past by other names including *laogu pai* 老古派 'the

⁷ Ma Tong (1983), p 108–112.

ancient sect', *zungu pai* 尊古派 'the sect that honours the Qur'an' or 'the sect that honours antiquity', and sometimes as the *laojiao* 老教 Ancient Teachings to distinguish it from the *xinjiao* 新教 or New Teachings. There is considerable confusion about the meaning of Old and New Teachings in both the western and the Chinese sources. Sometimes, the Old Teachings refers to the *Gedimu*, the New Teachings to the Jahriyya order of Naqshbandi Sufism and the *Yihewani* are known as the New New Teachings *Xinxinjiao* 新新教. At other times, and especially in the northwest, the term New Teachings has been used to refer to the Jahriyya and the Old Teachings to the Huasi Multicoloured Mosque (or Flowery Mosque) *menhuan* of the Khufiyya order. In Gansu where the *Gedimu* advocated breaking the Ramadan fast after the fourth, the sunset, prayer (the *shamu*),⁸ they were also known as the 'break after' *houkai* 后开 tradition.

The *Gedimu* is the most conservative of all the traditions in Chinese Islam. Ma Tong holds the view that this is due to the civilising effect of Han culture and Confucianism. The *Gedimu* tradition in the centuries during which it developed in China was, not surprisingly, influenced by the Chinese culture that surrounded it. The widespread use of the Chinese language was one obvious example, but even religious rituals may have been changed under the influence of the dominant Han culture, for example the wearing of white mourning clothes and the naming of days of commemoration for the dead the *touqi* first seven and *erqi* second seven days, forty days and one hundred days. Ma Tong maintains that these are from the Han rather than the Islamic tradition, but the same customs were also found in Persian society.⁹

It is also important to note that the development of Islamic education in Ming and Qing dynasty China was, at least superficially, all within the *Gedimu* tradition. In the early years, there was no acknowledged alternative. All the renowned teachers who sought to use mosque education to revitalise Islam and ensure its survival in China from Hu Dengzhou (1522–1592) through to the eighteenth century appear to have been in the mainstream *Gedimu* tradition.¹⁰ However, Françoise Aubin has pointed to the complexity and subtlety of the language employed by many Muslim writers, and to the different levels of discourse being operated. On one level the language was straightforward and accessible to Confucian-trained

8 From the Persian *sham* 'evening' or 'supper' Lambton (1961) p 93

9 Ma Tong (1983) p 125; Feng Jinyuan (1991) p 77–80.

10 Ma Tong (1983) p 125.

literati with no specialist Qur'anic discipline. On another level, because of the alternative meanings that could be read into words, one reading giving a perfectly standard Confucian meaning, another a special meaning, linked to an Arabic religious term that would only be known to initiates, many of the classic Islamic texts also appear to have a profound Sufi meaning.¹¹

From the eighteenth century with the challenge of the Sufi and other approaches to Islam, the Islamic community was divided and the name *Gedimu* introduced to designate the more conservative Muslims who wished to retain existing doctrines and rituals. Of the rest, some embraced Sufism and became members of *menhuan* and some joined the *Yihewani* (Ikhwani) sect. A local history of Gansu, Ningxia and Qinghai recorded a dispute between different groups of Gansu Muslims in 1748: 'In the early years of the Qianlong reign, differences arose among the Hui of Hezhou between those who broke the Ramadan fast after prayers and those who broke it before the prayers. The origin of this is not clear but it has divided the religion in two.'¹² The dispute was in fact between the *Gedimu* who broke the fast after prayers and the Multicoloured Mosque (*Huasi*) *menhuan* who broke it before. The differences resulted in a law suit by Ma Yinghuan, an eminent Ahong of the Hezhou *Gedimu* community. He lost the case and then left for Yunnan, giving Ma Laichi and his son a golden opportunity to propagate their Multicoloured Mosque Khufiyya doctrines.¹³

In more recent times, during the 1950s, there were regular disputes between the *Gedimu* and the *Yihewani* in Linxia, Zhangjiachuang, Pingliang and other parts of Gansu province. One rigid *Gedimu* parish which had had an *Yihewani* Ahong imposed on it by the warlord Ma Bufang before 1949 was able to have him expelled after 1949 by using the CCP's religious freedom policies to enable them to return to their *Gedimu* rites. However, by the 1980s, the commanding position of the *Gedimu* in Chinese Islam was in question. With four million followers across the country, it was still the single largest group, but it had lost much of its former influence, particularly in the northwest where the Sufi *menhuan* are strongest. Its emphasis was on piety, orthodoxy and harmony a stance which made it the most acceptable of the Islamic groups to the Communist Party who saw in

11 Aubin (1990).

12 *Gan Ning Qing shilue* in Ma Tong (1983) p 125-126.

13 Ma Tong (1983) p 126.

its policies a way towards stability and unity while allowing scope for Muslim aspirations. Much of the failure of the *Gedimu* to retain its leadership over Islam in China has been blamed on disunity and a lack of a single authority figure. This has also been blamed for the failure of the great Shaanxi Hui rising in the 1860s as shown in chapter 5. During that insurrection, over 700,000 Hui, mostly *Gedimu* in 18 battalions, threatened the Qing stronghold of Xi'an but in spite of the weakness of the Qing armies they did not press home their attack and were routed. After their retreat into Gansu, Qinghai and Xinjiang, they were scattered throughout the northwest and picked off in small groups by Qing troops.¹⁴

The authority of the *Gedimu* from the beginning was exercised through a mosque community system which operated in a similar way to the parish in Christian communities. A residential area might have started off with several mosques but this was modified so that there was only one mosque to each parish. Parishes were independent, with no parish under the jurisdiction of another, no parish interfering with the religious affairs of any other and each parish getting on with its own business. In other words the *Gedimu* system was a loose organisation which did not lead to the creation of a religious hierarchy or regional power bases and did not normally threaten the Imperial Chinese status quo. Although the original purpose of the mosques was religious, they naturally became centres for Muslim political, economic and cultural activities, consistent with the views of the early Muslims that there was no separation between religious and secular life. In addition to the regular prayers and ceremonies associated with festivals, mosques fulfilled a number of social functions. Muslims could go to the mosque for the arbitration of civil disputes as it functioned as a court for believers. Mosques also had the duty to provide training for the successors of the Ahongs and the status of the madrasa was often the most important factor in the status of the mosque. Islamic education was a high priority. Consultation on community affairs before the formulation of policy naturally took place in the mosque, and, in times of conflict, the mosque was the natural headquarters for the direction of military operations. Not surprisingly this was the role of the mosque that successive Chinese governments, not least the government of the PRC sought to eliminate.¹⁵

14 Ma Tong (1983) p 125-126.

15 Ma Tong (1983) p 119-121.

The Three Elder *sanzhangjiao* system of mosque organisation which was later to become the standard throughout Chinese Islam originated within the *Gedimu* tradition. It was based on a system originally imported by Arab and Persian Muslims into the port cities of the southeastern coast during the Tang and Song dynasties, in which *shaihai* (*shaykhs*) and *gazhui* (*qadi*) were appointed by the Muslim community. Chinese officials also appointed *fanzhang*, officials responsible for liaison between the immigrant community and the Chinese bureaucracy. This combination of officials reflected the interface of politics and religion and was the basis for the Three Elder system. The names given to the three officials varied from area to area, but in the influential Gansu, Ningxia and Qinghai area, the titles of *zhangjiao* (Imam), *haituibu* (Khatib) and *muanjin* (*mu'adhdhin* or *muezzin*) became firmly established. From the eighteenth century the names changed and the three were known as *kaixue ahong* 开学阿訇, the main *ahong* who led the congregation in prayer, preached, taught the scriptures and directed religious ceremonies; *er ahong* the second *ahong* who was his deputy and also responsible for the educational activities of the mosque; and *majin* or *muanjin* (*muezzin*) who was responsible for the call to prayer. The functions and duties of the clergy varied from area to area. There were two other non-clergy positions, the *xuedong* who was essentially the business manager of the mosque and dealt with the middle class Muslims and the *xianglao*, village elders, who were 'responsible for enthusiastic lower class believers.' The *xianglao* was part of a Qing government attempt to integrate the administration of mosques into the system of rural control and related to the headman in the *xiangyue* community contract system.¹⁶ The *xuedong* and *xianglao* were drawn from the respectable and pious Hui middle class and were expected to have some knowledge of Arabic and the Qur'an and the rituals associated with circumcision, marriage and funerals.¹⁷

In orthodox mosques, the *kaixue ahong* Main Ahong was normally appointed from outside the local community by invitation. In most mosques in Gansu, Ningxia and Qinghai, the *kaixue ahong* is simultaneously the Imam and was therefore invited to take up the post. The invited Ahong was received by the community at a grand welcoming ceremony by all the Muslims in the parish and welcomed

16 Ma Tong (1983) p 122.

17 During the Cultural Revolution, when the Ahongs were imprisoned, exiled or put under surveillance, it was the *xianglao* elders who took over their duties.

with gifts presented by a carefully selected delegation. Muslims from neighbouring communities attended to offer their congratulations and a banquet was held to receive the guests and the new Ahong. The *xuedong* and *xianglao* were elected from within the community. The term of office of the Ahong varied from place to place, but was between two and four years with three years being the most common and six years being the maximum any Ahong could expect. At the expiry of this term of office, the Ahong would preach a final sermon after the first prayers that followed Qurban or Ramadan. If he had been popular he might be asked to stay on, if not he would be allowed to hold a farewell party and return to his home town or village.¹⁸

The *Gedimu*, as the most orthodox of Muslims in China, belong to the Sunni tradition and the Hanafi school of law and came into conflict with the Sufi movements that burgeoned in eighteenth century China. The main doctrinal differences could be expressed in the different emphasis placed on the Sharia' *sheruoati* which was of greatest importance to the *Gedimu* and the Tariqa *tuoruogeti* which was the centre of the Sufi belief system. The *Gedimu* held the view that this world and the afterlife were inseparable and that Muslims had to obtain merit in this life if they were to attain happiness in the next world. This made the *Gedimu* very much a this-worldly sect, not averse to compromise with non-Muslim authorities.

There was serious conflict over the tombs *gongbei* of Sufi saints which were venerated by their followers. For orthodox Muslims this violated the proscription on idol worship but *Gedimu* authorities generally compromised by agreeing that the tombs of saints, many of whom were of foreign origin, should be respected and that followers could visit them but opposed the raising of funds to build or repair them.¹⁹

Yihewani

The *Yihewani* sect made its first appearance in China in Hezhou (present day Linxia) in southwest Gansu and from there spread throughout northwest China. It eventually became a large and influential grouping within Chinese Islam and, like the *Gedimu*, but in contrast to the Sufi *menhuan*, was very loosely organised. Its present name appears to be

18 Ma Tong (1983) p 122-123.

19 Ma Tong (1983) p 123.

taken from a Chinese transcription of the Arabic *ikhtwan*, 'brotherhood' and it was also known in China as the *aihaili sunna* (respect the scriptures) sect and sometimes as the New New Teaching *xinxinjiao* to distinguish it from the Old Teaching *Gedimu* Islam or Sufism. It was often categorised with Sufism as the New Teaching and this has caused great confusion among both Chinese and western observers.

The origins of the sect within China are clear. It was created by Ma Wanfu as an instrument of religious renewal but its connections with Islamic movements outside China are less certain. Because of its name, it is reasonable to assume that it is a Chinese offshoot of Arabian Wahhabism but the connection is not conclusive.²⁰

Ma Wanfu, whose religious name was Nuhai was generally known as the Guoyuan or Orchard *Hajji* and sometimes as Orchard Ma, Ma Guoyuan. This is because he was born in Guoyuan 果园 (Orchard) village in a Salar area on the border between the present day provinces of Gansu and Qinghai in 1849. He died in 1934 and is buried in the outskirts of Xining, the capital of Qinghai province. Ma Wanfu began his religious career as a follower of the Sufi Beizhuang *menhuan*, studied in a number of Beizhuang mosques and was finally ordained an Ahong under the supervision of a noted Qur'anic scholar, the Dongxiang Walijia Ahong. He made the *hajj* pilgrimage to Mecca in 1888 with his mentor and they enrolled in an Islamic academy. Ma Wanfu became fluent in Arabic and Persian and returned from Saudi Arabia with a great determination to reform Chinese Islam.

This he did on his return to China when he publicly resigned from the Beizhuang *menhuan*, declaring that all the Sufi orders were incompatible with true Islam. Together with a number of former *menhuan* members, several Ahongs from the *Gedimu* tradition and others, most of whom had made the pilgrimage to Mecca and were the leading Ahongs of Hezhou, he promoted *Yihewani* doctrines. What united them was the concern that Islam in China had become too Sinicised and was drifting away from its Islamic character. To counter, this the *Yihewani* Ahongs concentrated on the study of scriptures, that they had brought back from Saudi Arabia, with the Qur'an as the central text. The core group of *Yihewanis* taught in the area around Hezhou and had supporters in mosques in Dongxiang, Guanghe, Hezheng and further west into Qinghai province. The central tenets of their teaching were contained in the Guoyuan Ten

20 Ma Tong (1983) p 127-8; Gladney (1991) p 55; Mian Weilin (1981) p 118-131.

Points which detailed how the Qur'an should be read in the mosque and studied.²¹ *Yihewani* teachings were vigorously and sometimes violently opposed by the members of the Sufi *menhuan* but the simplicity of their teachings and their appeal to respect the original texts of Islam proved attractive and the sect grew rapidly.

In 1895, leaders of the Multicoloured Mosque *menhuan* in Hezhou took advantage of the withdrawal of Qing forces which had been transferred east to take part in the war with Japan and led their followers in Hezhou (Linxia), Didao (Lintao) and Xunhua in a rising against Qing rule. Ma Wanfu responded and brought in his *Yihewani* supporters, drawing up what they referred to as a 'no surrender pact' with a Dongxiang leader Ma Dahan for the defence of the line between Guanghe, Sanjiaji and Tiaoheyan.

But when the Qing court sent the Provincial Commander in Chief *tidu*, Dong Fuxiang, from Kashghar with thirteen battalions of foot and mounted soldiers to advance on Hezhou with the Xunhua Battalion Major, Ma Anliang, an ethnic Hui who served the Manchu Qing dynasty, as advance guard, he broke his oath of alliance, colluded with Ma Anliang and betrayed Ma Dahan by surrendering without consulting him. The troops of the indignant Ma Dahan fought on alone and resisted to the bitter end. Ma Dahan was killed by Dong and Ma Anliang.²²

After the 1895 insurrection was suppressed, Ma Anliang was afraid that he might be incriminated by Ma Wanfu so he sent him a message suggesting that he flee. Ma Wanfu changed his name and hid outside the town gate of Jinning where he enlisted as a student with the Ahong Xiao Ma. The Ahong realised that he was rather different from most of the run of the mill students who enrolled at the mosque and that his knowledge of the scriptures was quite exceptional. Without revealing that he suspected anything he sent Ma Wanfu to a mosque in Jingning as main Ahong. Ma did not return to Linxia until 1897 by which time the insurrection was considered to be over. He remained unpopular because of his betrayal of Ma Dahan and at first could not preach openly although later he became the main Ahong of Monigou, Hejia and other mosques under his own name and he was able to take students and preach. He regained his influence and popularity and his teachings were published. Followers of the *Yihewani* grew in number and the

21 Ma Tong (1983) p 130-131.

22 Ma Tong (1983) p 132.

movement continued its attacks on Sufi *menhuan*, calling for the destruction of the *gongbei* and calling on Muslims not to recognise false *shaykhs* and saints.²³

In 1908 a group of ten Ahongs led by Ma Wanfu organised a meeting of *Yihewani*s during the festival of Idal-Fitr, which celebrates the breaking of the fast of Ramadan, in what was then called Xichuan near Hezhou, or, as it is known today, Zhenbijiachang just outside Linxia. Over a hundred *Yihewani* devotees attended and Ma Wanfu announced with great excitement that the time had come for the *Yihewani* to unite all Chinese Muslim sects including the Sufi *menhuan* into one brotherhood. He called for blood-sacrifice as an act of *shexide* (shahid) martyrdom. Ma Wanfu's call put the *menhuan* leaders on the defensive and led to doctrinal wrangles, scuffles and disturbances involving the *Yihewani* and other orders. The *Gedimu* leadership took the opportunity to issue a statement excommunicating Ma Anliang who was a follower of the Multicoloured Mosque *menhuan* and demanding that the provincial governor at Lanzhou punish Ma Wanfu as a rebel.²⁴

The Emergence of the Salafiyya

One of the most recent *menhuan* in China emerged from this *Yihewani* tradition. This is the Sailaifengye or Salafiyya which had its origins in Linxia in the nineteen thirties and spread throughout northwestern China in the nineteen fifties. The name is taken from the Arabic *sharif* (descendants of the Prophet). The Salafiyya were initially also known as the White Sect because one of their founders, Ma Debao, came from Baizhuang (White Manor) village in Guanghe county which is between Lanzhou and Linxia. They were also called the Three Raisers (*santai*) 三抬 because they raised their hands three times during prayers rather than once which was more usual. The Salafiyya felt the name Three Raisers was offensive as it did not really indicate what their rituals were and wished to be known as the Sailaifu or Sharif order. The founding fathers of the order were Ma Debao (1867–1977), who was also known as the White Manor Ahong, and Ma Zhengqing. The pair had originally been prominent Ahongs in the *Yihewani* sect. They had been the principal Ahongs in mosques in various towns in Gansu, Ningxia, Qinghai and Shaanxi, actively promoting *Yihewani* teaching. In 1936,

²³ Ma Tong (1983) p 132–133.

²⁴ Ma Tong (1983) p 133–134.

Ma Debao and Ma Zhengqing took part in the *hajj* pilgrimage in a delegation of one hundred and twenty three led by the former head of the Qinghai government, Ma Lin. This pilgrimage was the source of their new *menhuan* as they became exposed to Wahabbi ideas and the threefold raising of hands during prayer which they understood as a sign of respect for the three preceding generations. They returned to Linxia with Wahhabi texts and a determination to establish Wahhabism as the main form of Islam in China. To symbolise the change, Ma Debao grew his hair to shoulder length and began to use the threefold raising of hands during prayers. On December 30 1949, Ma Debao and his supporters invited the Imams of all the *Yihewani* mosques in the Bafang quarter of Linxia to agree to a joint proclamation of Wahhabi doctrines on a Friday in the middle of April 1950. The majority of *Yihewani* Ahongs preferred to follow the original teachings of Ma Wanfu and the call to promote Wahhabism received only lukewarm support. Ma Debao and Ma Zhengqing were branded as traitors to the *Yihewani* movement and their teachings were condemned as heresy. Ma Debao then broke away from the mainstream *Yihewani* and established his own *menhuan* with a small number of followers in Linxia and Lanzhou. After 1949, this Sailaifengye *menhuan* spread from its centre in Linxia and became highly influential, particularly during the post 1979 reform period. Although it began life within the *Yihewani* tradition, for all practical purposes it is now a separate sect.²⁵

Sufism

Knowledge of the existence of Sufi networks in China is a surprisingly recent phenomenon among westerners and non-Muslim Chinese. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries they were classified together with other sects which were not *Gedimu* and known as the *xinjiao* or New Teachings. Sufism has a long history in China and has played an important role in sustaining Islam through centuries of repression.

Sufi orders or brotherhoods in China, and particularly in Gansu, Ningxia and Qinghai where they are strongest, are usually known as *menhuan*, a term of which the origins are still imperfectly understood, but which is always assumed to correspond to the Arabic *silsila* or chain of hereditary *shaykhs*. In Xinjiang, the equivalent orders are called *yichan* 依禅, from the Persian *ishan* (they). In terms of doctrine

²⁵ Gao Zhanfu (1991) p 128–134.

and ritual they are the same as the *menhuan*, but the two do not mix. *Menhuan* are for Chinese speaking Hui. *Ishan* are for Turkic speakers, primarily the Uyghurs.

There have been four main groups of Sufi orders in China, the Khufiyya *Hufuye*, the Jahriyya *Zheherenye* or *Zhehelinye*, the Qadariyya *Gadelinye*, and the Kubrawiyya *Kuburenye*.²⁶ The former two have their origin in the Yemeni *Shazilinye* and *Shibandingyeh* and the latter two in the *Gede'er* and *Kubulawei* orders. The orders are considered in more detail in chapter eight. The Sufi brotherhoods in Xinjiang mainly belong to the Naqshbandiyya, which also has influential branches in Gansu, mainly Jahriyya and Khufiyya.²⁷

Members of the Sufi orders regard themselves as orthodox Sunni Muslims as do the *Gedimu* and the main brotherhoods trace their origins back to the great Caliphs of early Islam, the Khufiyya to Abu Bakr, the Kubrawiyya to Omar, the Jahriyya to Osman and the Qadariyya to Ali. Chinese Sufis inherited the same tradition, but with some variations. Some Chinese Kubrawiyya members trace their line of authority back to Fatima, the daughter of the prophet Muhammad.

In general, Muslims in China can be divided roughly into two main groups. In Xinjiang, where ethnic and linguistic ties with Central Asia are strong, ethnic consciousness and ethnic allegiance are usually considered to be stronger than religious consciousness and allegiance. Conversely, in Gansu, Ningxia and Qinghai, ethnic consciousness takes second place to religious affiliation. This is usually explained by geographical and social differences, the nomad Kazakhs in Xinjiang, for example, finding it more difficult, or less necessary, to concern themselves with the niceties of ritual than the settled Hui, although being no less sensitive to attacks on their beliefs. This does not, of course, completely explain the divide between the Uyghurs of Xinjiang, traditionally a settled farming community and their Hui neighbours. Almost all Muslims living within China are members of the majority Sunni side of Islam and follow the Hanafi school of law, the only exception being some Pamir Tajiks in Xinjiang who are followers of the Shi'a Ismaili tradition.²⁸

The spread of Sufism across Central Asia played an important part in the strengthening and revival of Islam in China in the seventeenth

26 Transcriptions of the Arabic names of these orders into Chinese characters have not been consistent over the centuries and there is therefore some variation in the spellings of the romanised Chinese.

27 Ma Tong (1983) p 209–212.

28 Ma Tong (1983) p 209–212.

and eighteenth centuries, and, as in the Soviet Union, may have been the crucial factor that prevented the absorption and assimilation of Hui Muslims into the Han majority and Confucianism. Sufism is usually the name given to the 'mysticism of Islam. This is the inner dimension of Islam and has been neatly described as "the Science of the Heart."²⁹ It is organised in a series of religious orders or brotherhoods which have had a profound influence on Islamic theology and literature and have regularly saved the religion from disintegration or destruction at the hands of invaders.³⁰

Although it is of course impossible to be precise about the origin of a movement of mysticism within a religion, there are interesting theories that suggest pre-Islamic influences on Sufism, including early Christianity, the vagrant Cynics of Greek philosophy and Central Asian shamanism, which may in itself have been one of the influences on the Cynics.³¹ Shamanism was, and to some extent still is, widespread across central and northern Asia, extending eastwards into Siberia and Korea, southwards into Mongolia and China and forming an important component of the pre-Buddhist Bon religion of Tibet.

However, Sufism in the form that it became popular throughout the Islamic world, including Muslim China, had its beginnings in the tenth century at a time when the 'Abbasid Caliphate ruling from Baghdad was passing from a sophisticated golden age, rich in culture and the arts, to a period of economic and political collapse.³² Although Sufi philosophy spread throughout what is now Iraq and Iran, it is interesting to note that many of the most inspiring exponents of Sufism came from the northeastern part of the Persian-speaking regions of Central Asia, the region to which many of China's Hui Muslims trace their origins. For example, Serraj who died in 988 was born in northeastern Iran, Kalabadhi who died in 990 or 995 was a native of a district of Bukhara called Kalabadh, Daylami was from northern Iran and Sulami (died 1021) from northeastern Iran.³³

Sufism developed further under the Turkish conquest of the eastern part of the Muslim world and was given a new and vital form of organisation by the southern Iranian preacher and religious

29 Netton (1992) p 246.

30 Annemarie Schimmel's *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* gives a comprehensive introduction to the Sufi phenomenon.

31 Baldick p 21.

32 Baldick p 50-51.

33 Baldick p 54-58.

leader, Kazaruni (died 1035). Kazaruni developed the concept of the 'lodge' or 'hostel', two possible English translations for a number of Arabic terms of which the most common is *ribat* and the Persian equivalent *khanaqah*. The lodges were attached to mosques and gave shelter and sustenance to travellers and to the needy without charge. A network of lodges was established by Kazaruni in the rural south of Iran and by the fourteenth century, this had spread to Turkey and to China. The service provided by the members of the lodges became one of many paths or *tariqa* in the Sufi order.³⁴ Another Sufi based in north-eastern Iran, Qushayri (died 1074) was responsible for the institution of the *shaykh* to guide the Sufi brethren, although this was apparently due to a concern that the lodge members might be using their religious practices to take too much of an interest in young boys. The Saljuq empire sponsored the creation of many Sufi lodges which it hoped to use both to defend its conquests and control its subjects.³⁵

It is notoriously difficult to define what mystical sects do or what they believe in and Sufism is no exception. J.T. Trimingham has provided some guidance in his standard work on Sufi orders.

Sufism 'embraces those tendencies in Islam which aim at direct communion between God and man. It is a sphere of spiritual experience which runs parallel to the main stream of Islamic consciousness deriving from prophetic revelation and comprehended within the Shari'a and theology.'³⁶

The parallel nature of Sufism is important, both generally and in the development of the orders in China. Sufis do not regard themselves as separate from the rest of Islam but rather orthodox Muslims who also operate on an additional level of spiritual competence. This ambiguity and duality is an important component of Islamic practice in China.

'Sufi mysticism makes use of 'intuitive and emotional spiritual facilities which are generally dormant and latent unless called into play through training under guidance. This training, thought of as travelling the Path (*salak aT-Tariq*), aims at dispersing the veils which hide the self from the Real and thereby become transformed or absorbed into undifferentiated Unity. It is not primarily an intellectual process, though the

³⁴ Baldick p 60.

³⁵ Baldick p 63, 66.

³⁶ Trimingham, 1971 p 1-2.

experience of the mystic led to the formulation of various types of mystical philosophy, but rather a reaction against the external rationalization of Islam in law and systematic theology, aiming at spiritual freedom whereby man's intrinsic intuitive spiritual senses could be allowed full scope. The various Ways (Turuq, sing. Tariqa) are concerned with this process, and it is with the historical development, practical organisation, and modes of worship of these Ways that this book is concerned.³⁷

At times of desperate uncertainty and unsettling social and political changes, mystical movements like Sufism often flourish.

'The thirteenth century was an age of disturbance and change as the Mongol hordes swept over central Asian Muslim states one after the other, Baghdad being conquered in AD 1258. Many refugees fled to those parts of the Muslim world which seemed more remote from the scourge. Among these were Anatolia in the north-west and Hindustan in the south-east. Many Sufis found a new home within the jurisdiction of the Turkish sultanate of Delhi.'³⁸

The conversion to Islam by the viceroy of Iran in 1295 and the growing Muslim influence in Central Asia strengthened the position of Islam in the region towards the end of the century.³⁹

The Sufi *tariqa* has a primary meaning of path, that is the spiritual path followed by the Sufis. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries it acquired a secondary meaning, that of a group of people following the path or a brotherhood. The *tariqa* in this secondary sense has been defined as 'a brotherhood of Sufis who have a common pedigree of spiritual masters, and in which elders initiate disciples and grant them formal permission to continue a common school of thought and practice. The brotherhood sometimes does and sometimes does not have an organisation.'⁴⁰ In practice the brotherhoods were hierarchical organisations with elders who had instructing the junior members in a religious programme for which they derived their authority from the founder of their order. In time this authority was manifested by a chain or *silsila* of teachers, a hereditary spiritual pedigree maintained over the centuries and to a certain extent

37 Trimingham, 1971 p 1-2.

38 Trimingham, 1971 p 22.

39 Baldick (1989) p 87.

40 Baldick (1989) p 73.

projected backwards to increase the authority of an elder by associating him with an eminent teacher of the past. There is no certainty that the claimed chains of authority always bear any relation to actual teaching or permission given by a teacher to succeed him.⁴¹

‘From the beginning of the thirteenth century certain centres (if we think of the centre as being a man, not a place) became the sees of Tariqas, mystical schools of teaching centres. This happened when a centre or circle became focused on one director in a new way and turned into a school designed to perpetuate his name, type of teaching, mystical exercises, and rule of life. Each such Tariqa was handed down through a continuous “chain” (*silsila*), or mystical *isnad*. The derivative shaikhs are, therefore, the spiritual heirs of the founder.’⁴²

The transformation of Sufi companionships into initiatory colleges began with the Sunni triumphs over Sh’ite dynasties (Buyids in Baghdad, AD 1055: Fatimids in Egypt, AD 1171), and was settled during the troubled time of the Mongol conquests (Baghdad, AD 1258), which were accompanied by considerable Sufi migrations whereby it became a rural as well as an urban movement of the spirit. A significant feature of the change is that the groups, about the time of Saladin, took over the Shi’ite custom of Bai’a, initiation with oath of allegiance to the shaikh.⁴³

Sufi brotherhoods or orders met in lodges where the main activities were the study of religious commentaries, readings from the Qur’an, either collectively or individually as a form of spiritual discipline, prayer, fasting, poetry or dance depending on the rules of the order.⁴⁴ The influence of Sufism went beyond the spiritual and in parallel with the spiritual networks there emerged a network of hostels. The prime purpose of these hostels was to provide for religious travellers, but they gradually became a network used by Muslim traders

‘Sufism had now [12th century] become a profession and this period is characterized by a great growth of unspecialised Sufi establishments. The popularity of the Persian-type hospices is

41 Baldick (1989) p 75–79.

42 Trimingham, 1971 p 10.

43 Trimingham, 1971 p 14.

44 Baldick (1989) p 96.

associated with the Seljuq period as can be seen from any list of the dates when these were founded.⁴⁵

Iranian regions do not seem to have developed the officially sponsored *khanaqah* (religious hostel) and the change of their Sufi hostels to representation of a holy line . . . was not marked by any changes of name but by the addition of an honoured tomb, though more commonly the later *khanaqahs* were new foundations in association with a tomb. Later Turk and Mongol rulers rebuilt the tombs of famous saints and associated convents (sic) on more magnificent lines.⁴⁶

Trade was greatly facilitated by the establishment of these hostels (*khanaqah* in Persian) and merchants encouraged, in contrast to Chinese official policy which abhorred commerce.⁴⁷ Although there remained a formal distinction between trade guilds and *Tariqa*, the *Tariqa* sanctified trade, and guilds could be linked to a *Tariqa* and its saint.⁴⁸ Unsympathetic non-Muslim Chinese accounts of the hostels have emphasised their worldly rather than spiritual functions.

'Muslim merchants coming to China to trade could as they wished find accommodation with Muslim merchant families settled there or in hostels where services were most comprehensive. The guests' wealth and property were therefore appropriately stored. They even selected maids and concubines for the guests and rooms where they could live together'.⁴⁹

Khwarazm Sufism

When the Mongols invaded Transoxania in 1221 and massacred much of the indigenous Persian speaking population, one of the victims was probably Kubra of Khwarazm, the founder of the Kubrawiyya brotherhood of Sufis. Disciples of Kubra escaped and one is known to have taken refuge in Turkey.⁵⁰ There are no records

45 Trimingham, 1971 p 16-17.

46 Trimingham, 1971 p 21.

47 Rossabi, Morris 'Muslims and Central Asian Revolts' in Jonathan D. Spence and John E. Wills, Jr. (ed) *From Ming to Ch'ing: Conquest, Region and Continuity in Seventeenth Century China* New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1979.

48 Trimingham, 1971 p 25.

49 Shen Fuwei *Zhong Xi wenhua jiaoliu shi* Shanghai, 1985, p 250 cited in Lai (1988) p 110.

50 Baldick (1989) p 79-81.

of followers of the Sufi brotherhoods among the thousands of craftsmen and others pressed into the service of the Mongols and taken back to China and Sufism probably did not become important in China till much later, but since one of the characteristics of Sufism has been to maintain the faith in secret by various forms of 'recollection' in times of adversity, it is perfectly possible that the Sufi tradition in China dates back to the early thirteenth century.

Sufism in Bukhara was already well established by the tenth century and there were links between the craft guilds and the religious brotherhoods 'Just as the art of writing was a restricted profession open to those who were chosen by the scribes to enter their guild, so did the shoemakers, silver workers, and others organise themselves into craft guilds. In Bukhara, as in other cities of the eastern Islamic world, the guilds developed religious associations and later became associated with dervish orders.' In the eleventh and twelfth centuries mystical orders went through a period of growth and there were constant contacts between the Sufis of Khurasan and Transoxania.⁵¹

The Naqshbandiyya

Of all the Sufi orders, the one which came to play a major role among Muslims in China was the Naqshbandiyya. This order was named after Muhammad ibn Muhammad Baha' ad-Din Naqshband a philosopher and poet who lived in Bukhara and who died in 1389. The Naqshbandiyya are found throughout the Caucasus and Central Asia where in recent years they were involved in resistance to Russian domination. Naqshbandiyya members in Pakistan are involved with the movement for Islamisation and with fraternal groups in Afghanistan. Naqshbandiyya followers are considered to be the most political of all the Sufi orders. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the relatively stable societies of the settled peoples of Muslim Central Asia were subject to a number of threats: the collapse of the Timurid empire was followed by raids of Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Turkmen nomads; the Iranian Safavid state converted to Shi'a Islam, disrupting links with Sunni Central Asia; the Russian empire was expanding into North and Central Asia, and a series of succession and dynastic crises in Kashgar and Yarkand, the most important towns in the west of Tarim basin. The succession of 'Abd al-Karim ('Abd al-Latif) in 1565 ushered in a period of dynastic squabbles that weakened the ruling Chaghatay khanate.

⁵¹ Frye (1965) p 76, 159-60, 176.

The leaders of the Naqshbandiyya filled the vacuum. 'This Sufi order . . . was a religious group that emphasized direct experience with God through silent "remembrance" (*dhikr*) of the divine and through head-bobbing, body-shaking and other evidences of ecstasy. It sought to return to a pure form of Islam untainted by foreign ideas or customs, be they Buddhist, Shamanistic, or Christian. Its leaders, known as "*khojas*", claimed descent from the Prophet and moved from one oasis and town to another seeking converts.' Naqshbandiyya and other Sufi orders were conservative religious groups which enjoyed widespread support because of their economic and political views. Their influence developed to such a degree that by the end of the sixteenth century, the Khojas were far more important than the Chaghatay khans and the most significant political conflict was the rivalry between the Aqtaghliq (White Mountain) Khoja in Kashgar and the Qarataghliq (Black Mountain) Khoja in Yarkand. There was a marked decline in caravan trade because of the expansion of maritime trade to China by the English and the Dutch, and the conflict between the Ottoman emperors and the rulers of the Safavid dynasty, such that in general Central Asian contact with China was severely limited.⁵²

Naqshbandi Sufism, in the form of the Jahriyya and Khufiyya, and in particular the concept of the silent *dhikr*, was an ideal vehicle for the Hui to accommodate outwardly to the prevailing Chinese, or Han or Confucian tradition while preserving their own Islamic culture. The name Naqshbandi does not usually feature in accounts of Chinese Islamic groups, but it will be shown that the tradition persisted within the borders of China

52 This account of events in Central Asia draws heavily on Rossabi, Morris 'Muslims and Central Asian Revolts' in Jonathan D. Spence and John E. Wills, Jr. (ed) *From Ming to Ch'ing: Conquest, Region and Continuity in Seventeenth Century China* New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1979. On the Naqshbandi order in China and elsewhere in Asia including India, Sumatra and the Philippines, see also Annemarie Schimmel (1975) p 363-373 and Ruthven, Malise *Islam in the World* Pelican 1991 p 274-8, 284-5.

Sects and Sufism (2): Sufi Orders in China

Daotang and Menhuan

In China, the central organisation of the Sufi pathway (Arabic *tariqa*) evolved into the *daotang* 道堂 'hall of the path or doctrine' or *jiaotang* 教堂 'hall of teaching' often based on the tomb *gongbei* 拱北 of the founder. The equivalent of the Arabic *silsila* (the inherited chain of succession) is possibly the *menhuan* 门宦, a term for which it is difficult to find a precise Chinese etymology, but which appears to be connected with Confucian concepts of officialdom *huan* 宦 (literally a government servant or official) and gateway or pathway, reflecting the influence of Confucian thinking on Chinese Islam that can probably be traced back to the Ming Muslim thinker Wang Daiyu. Ma Tong, the leading contemporary Chinese specialist on the development of *menhuan* considers the organisation to be a specifically Chinese innovation, a Chinese contribution to Islam, because neither the term nor the *menhuan* system exist in the Arab world or Persia.¹ However the system seems to be a continuation of the *silsila* rather than a completely new form of religious organisation. Ma Tong suggests that the term *menhuan* first appeared in the twenty third year of the Guangxu reign of the Qing dynasty (1897) in an essay on Muslim denominations by the Hezhou (Linxia) Prefectural Magistrate Yang Zengxin, who later became Governor of Xinjiang, in *A Brief History of Gansu, Ningxia and Qinghai*.² However, Mian Weilin suggests that the term *menhuan* might be related to an older form, *menfa* 门阀, which means powerful and influential families, or the phrase *menhu* 门户 used by many people in north-west

1 Ma Tong (1983) p 107.

2 Ma Tong (1983) p 107.

China to mean 'gateway,' or 'faction' and argues that there may have been some confusion between the terms with both indicating the power or influence of a clan or group.³ The distinctive pronunciation of the dialects of northwestern Mandarin spoken in the Gansu and Ningxia areas makes this kind of confusion perfectly possible.

The Sufi orders in China are usually classified under four main headings, the Khufiyya, the Jahriyya, the Qadariyya, and the Kubrawiyya. Within each group are various orders or *menhuan* 门宦 which were created by individual *shaykhs* or saints and have been maintained by their descendants. As we have seen, the meaning of the term *menhuan* is far from clear, although it seems to be the equivalent of both the Arabic *tariqa* (the Sufi path or way) and the *silsila*, the chain of holy men linking it with Islamic orders in the past, and in China it almost always involves the hereditary succession as head of the order, the veneration of the tomb of the founding fathers. The Sufi orders are characterised by their propensity to split and proliferate. The examples in this chapter have been chosen to illustrate the nature of the Sufi organisations in China. They are not intended to be comprehensive or necessarily representative.

Francoise Aubin has drawn attention to the peculiar fact that the name of perhaps the most influential of all the Sufi orders in Asia, the Naqshbandiyya, was virtually absent from both Chinese and western literature on Chinese Sufism. Perhaps this was entirely appropriate given the covert and underground nature of the order. The posthumous publication of Joseph Fletcher's 'The Naqshbandiyya in Northwest China' filled this gap in western scholarship on Chinese Islam and made the link between Sufi orders in China and in Central Asia and the Yemen explicit and irrefutable, although he relied heavily on an article by Joseph Trippner for details of the formation of Naqshbandi *menhuan* among Chinese-speaking Muslims and biographical details of their leaders.⁴

In fact the Naqshbandiyya did spread into China. Joseph Fletcher gives a detailed account of how the order spread from west of the Pamirs to the Tarim Basin in what is now southern Xinjiang in the

3 Mian (1981) p 19–21.

4 Fletcher (1995); Trippner (1961) is based on material collected by the author in Gansu, Ningxia and Qinghai in the period 1929–35. He cites some written sources including local newspapers and provincial and prefectural gazetteers but does not give precise references, especially for the histories of the *menhuan*, and much of his information appears to come from interviews with local Muslim leaders and is therefore part of the oral tradition on which Ma Tong also draws.

fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It travelled eastwards into Gansu and became the most powerful of all Sufi movements in China, first under the name of the Khufiyya (Chinese *Hufuye* 虎夫耶) and its branches and the Multicoloured Mosque *menhuan* of Ma Laichi was probably the earliest Naqshbandiyya order in China. The Jahriyya (*Zheherenye* 哲赫忍耶) order of Ma Mingxin was a rival branch of the Naqshbandiyya order and can be traced back to a spiritual master in the Yemen. This is important because it confirms that the Sufi organisations that evolved within China were not idiosyncratic, isolated phenomena peculiar to China but an integral part of developments that were affecting the whole Muslim world.⁵

Sufi Orders in China: Khufiyya

The Naqshbandiyya in its Khufiyya guise probably first appeared in China Proper during the first half of the sixteenth century, having made its way overland through Central Asia and entered China by the Western Regions (*Xiyu* 西域) as Xinjiang was then known. By the middle of the eighteenth century, it was firmly established, with its most prominent *shaykh*, Ma Laichi (1673–1753) based in Hezhou, now known as Linxia, in western Gansu. Unlike some other Sufi orders, the Khufiyya order has been more inclined to seek an accommodation with the government of the day, whether it was the Qing dynasty or the Republic. It is also notable for having produced a succession of capable military leaders including Ma Zhao'ao (1830–1866), his son Ma Anliang (1852–c.1920) and his sons Ma Tingran who was condemned to death by the Peoples Courts in 1962 and Ma Tingxian.

The Khufiyya was also known to the Chinese authorities as the Old Teaching *laojiao* 老教 and distinguished thus from the New Teaching *xinjiao* 新教 of the Jahriyya who were not so accommodating to the Chinese authorities.⁶

Khufiyya in Arabic means concealed or hidden, 'read in a low voice' *dinian* 低念 or the sect that reads in a low voice *dinianpai* 低念派.

5 Aubin, Françoise 'En Islam Chinois: Quels Naqshbandis?' in *Naqshbandis: Cheminements et situation actuelle d'un ordre mystique musulman*, edited by Marc Gaborieau, Alexandre Popovic and Thierry Zarcone *Varia Turkica* XVIII, Institut Français d'Études Anatoliennes d'Istanbul Istanbul 1990, p 515–520: Fletcher (1995).

6 Françoise Aubin argues that 'Nothing could be more erroneous to class together on the strength of the terminology the Old Teaching and the Ancient [*Gedimu*] system of discrete mosque communities.' Nevertheless the similarity of the terms has caused much confusion in both western and Chinese sources. Aubin 1990 p 516–7.

This distinguishes it from the Jahriyya orders whose remembrance or *dhikr* (Arabic) is usually vocalised. The Khufiyya order has many branches and is scattered widely throughout China. Although all of the branches teach a form of Khufiyya, there is no direct organisational link between the branches for the transmission of the *silsila* and each branch operates, teaches and exercises its religious authority independently. In this network of brotherhoods, some have taken their instruction directly from Islamic missionaries who travelled to China from the Arab world or Central Asia, for example the Bijiachang and the Mufuti. Others have their origin in Chinese *hajjis* who were influenced by Sufism in the Arab world on the pilgrimage to Mecca. An example of this is the *Huasi* or Multi-coloured Mosque order. Others, for example the Humen order, were created after individuals had studied Sufi classics. All of these seem to have involved complicated transmission of teachings and a profound impact on individual followers, but with the passage of time and economic, cultural and technical developments, these influences gradually vanished.

Within the Khufiyya branch of the Naqshbandi order, there are twenty one *menhuan*. These are the *Huasi*, *Mufuti*, *Bijiachang*, *Xianmen*, *Lintao*, two different *menhuan* both called *Liumen*, *Humen*, *Beizhuang*, *Hongmen*, *Fengmen*, *Yatou*, *Gaozhaojia*, *Dingmen*, *Tonggui*, *Mingyuetang*, *Wenquantang*, *Liangzhouzhuang*, *Jiangoujing*, *Famen* and *Salajiao*. The number of members probably runs to over a million today and they are mainly found in Hezhou, Lanzhou and Qinzhou in Gansu, in Xunhua, Hualong and Xining in Qinghai, in Yinchuan, Tongxin and western Haigu in Ningxia and in Xinjiang and Yunnan.

At the height of the Qing dynasty, the *Mufuti*, *Bijiachang*, *Huasi* and *Da Gongbei* and *Guanchuan* were the most flourishing. After that came the rise of the *Beizhuang* and the *Humen*. Towards the end of the Qing dynasty the creation of the *Yihewani* sect led to a steady decline in the membership of Sufi orders, especially the *Bijiachang*, the *Lintao* and the *Huasi*. This meant that only the *Guanchuan*, *Da Gongbei*, *Beizhuang*, *Humen*, *Mufuti* and *Hongmen* along with a few others have been able to retain their membership and authority till the present day. The others declined rapidly in numbers and influence. The larger *menhuan* had all been able to mobilise their own members in successive risings against the Qing. The attitude taken towards them by the Qing court can be seen in this passage from the *Ping Hui Zhi* 平回志 (Records of the Pacification of the Hui):

'There are three bandits nests in the prefecture, the Huasi, Bijiachang and Qijiachang in the north of the town, which are generally known as the *gongbei*' (tomb worshippers).⁷

The *menhuan* were clearly considered by the Qing as a serious threat to their control over the western regions of China.⁸ Examples of the Khufiyya *menhuan* include the Bijiachang and the Multicoloured Mosque (*Huasi*) which can represent the order.

Bijiachang Menhuan

The Bijiachang 毕家场 *menhuan* took its name from the site of its *gongbei* in the Erhuali district of Linxia. The tomb was burned down during the 1895 communal violence and again in 1927 by Ma Zhongying. In 1949 the site was burned and covered with gravel, leaving only the grave mounds of the founder of the *menhuan* Ma Zongshen and his successors. The Bijiachang operate mainly in the Bafang, Yangwashan and Ninghe Dagutai areas of Linxia but have followers throughout northwestern China. Ma Tong estimates their numbers at about twenty thousand.

Ma Zongsheng, whose religious name was Abudu Ruohaimani ('Abd-ul Rahman) was born in 1639 and died in 1719 aged eighty two. He claimed descent from a Persian who lived in the Tang capital of Chang'an (present-day Xi'an). This gave him great prestige as he was able to trace his spiritual authority back to the earliest days of Islam. Chang'an during the Tang dynasty was a cosmopolitan city which was home to many Persian, Arab and Central Asian traders and diplomats so there could be some foundation to his claim. Ma Zongsheng studied at the Xixiang mosque in Chang'an and later became its Ahong and then Leading Ahong. He set out on the *hajj* pilgrimage to Mecca via Xinjiang intending to find a master on the way from whom to acquire wisdom. However when he reached Hezhou he decided to settle there and became the Leading (*kaixue*) Ahong of the Bafang Northern Mosque.

In 1672, a missionary who claimed to be a twenty fifth generation descendant of the Prophet Mohammed, Huazhe Hedayetonglaxi (Khoja Hajatolleslam) Afage Maishehule passed through Xinjiang on the way to Huangzhong to the southwest of Xining to preach. Ma

7 Cited in Ma Tong (1983) p 214.

8 Ma Tong (1983) p 212-214; Mian Weilin (1981) p 45-57.

Zongsheng and others from Bafang travelled to Qinghai to see the Afage who gave them instruction in the *Khufiyya dhikr*. Unlike some of the other *menhuan* the Bijiachang placed great emphasis on orthodox beliefs and harmony with other *menhuan* and the *Gedimu*, so much so that Bijiachang Ahongs were often invited to become the leading Ahongs of *Gedimu* mosques.

The succession of the *shaykhs* of the Bijiachang was hereditary and the transmission was by means of a document, the religious name of Ma Zongsheng inscribed in Arabic. It was Ma Zongsheng's fifth son Ma Yiqing (1681–1750) who took over the leadership of the order on his father's death. He was considered to be even more learned than his father and during his tenure the Bijiachang was supported by over two thousand families in the Huangzhong and Hezhou areas.

The third generation *shaykh* was Ma Dawude (Da'ud Ma), Ma Yiqing's eldest son. He was responsible for the rebuilding of the three main mosques, the Qi, Northern and Western Mosques of the Bafang area of Linxia (then called Hezhou) and transforming the area into a centre of wealth and religious authority. His family later provided the hereditary Imams of the Northern Mosque under the Three Elder management system (*sanzhangjiao*).

The document of hereditary transmission was somehow lost. Some sources say that it disappeared during the Hui rising of the eighteen sixties, others that Ma Yiqing threw it into the well of the Lower South Mosque on the instructions of a 25th generation descendant of the Prophet or had it buried with the body of the second generation *shaykh*. Another account has it that the fourth generation Ahong, Dong Laxi, realising that none of the next generation of his family had the qualities to succeed him as *shaykh*, burnt the document. From the fourth generation, the Bijiachang stopped using the term Leading Ahong (*jiaozhu*) and began to refer to their leader as the Director (*zhuchiren*). the Director was responsible for the day to day management of the tomb and did not have the same spiritual authority of his predecessors.

Muhamode Yibulaximan (Muhammed Ibrahim) (1754–1816), the fifth generation Director, passed through Kashghar on his way to Mecca. He is said to have received instruction from a *Khufiyya shaykh* at a Kashghar *gongbei* who designated him the successor (*khalif*) of his *menhuan*. On his return to Linxia his new status revived the fortunes of the Bijiachang *menhuan* for a time. This is a paradigm of the way in which Chinese Islam, isolated from the mainstream of Muslim life renewed itself from time to time by contact with its roots.

The teachings of the Sufi orders were not exclusive or fixed. During the nineteenth century, leading members of the Bijiachang taught the precepts of Qadariyya and Naqshbandi Sufism as well as the Khufiyya tradition from which they came. By 1949, many of the ten thousand or so followers of the Bijiachang, living in Linxia, Lintan and the Xiji region of Ningxia, had come under the influence of the *Yihewani* sect. The Bijiachang did not have the strong central organisation that some *menhuan* had created and this probably accounts for its relative weakness and decline. Attendance at the four ceremonies at the *gongbei* held each year were poor by the early twentieth century.

The Bijiachang owned 94 *mu* of land in 1949 and had to hand over two thirds of this for redistribution to the poorest farmers during the Land Reform movement of the early nineteen fifties. The rest of the land was incorporated in cooperatives in 1956. The *menhuan* retained only its *gongbei* and survived on donations from its supporters.⁹

Ma Laichi and the Multicoloured Mosque (Huasi) Menhuan

Between 1465 and 1487, which was the Chenghua reign of the Ming dynasty, a group of Muslims living in the Bafang areas of Linxia built a mosque in what was then called West Phoenix Wood Town (*Xi Fenglin cheng*) and is known today as Multicoloured Mosque Street. The design and decoration of the mosque was modelled on Chinese Buddhist temples and imperial palaces rather than the austere conventions of traditional mosque architecture. It had carvings, paintings and multicoloured decoration and from this it acquired its name the Multicoloured Mosque *Huasi* 华寺. The name *Huasi* has been translated in the past as Flowery Mosque, but this is a simplistic translation. The first element *hua* does commonly mean 'flower' or 'flowery,' but another meaning is 'multicoloured,' 'coloured' or 'variegated' and the story of its origins make this translation more appropriate. The mosque was burned down during the rising of 1928 led by Ma Zhongying. When it was rebuilt in 1941, its area was about five *mu* (just under an acre) and the prayer hall was big enough to hold 2,000 people.

Ma Laichi's *gongbei* was built in 1803 in the multicoloured style of the mosque. Ma Anliang ordered that it be pulled down after the

⁹ Ma Tong (1983) p 214–221; Trippner (1961) p 149–150, but Trippner mistakenly identifies the *menhuan* founder as Ma Yiqing who was Ma Zongsheng's fifth son and successor as *shaykh*.

1895 rising and the timber from it was used to build a Confucian temple in Hezhou. In 1948 when the tomb was rebuilt, only the Eight Trigram Hall remained. The *menhuan* took its name from the design of the mosque and Multicoloured Mosque became its official name.¹⁰

Ma Laichi, was known to his followers as the *Daozu taiye* 道祖太爷 Highest Master and Founder of the Order. His family came from Chang'an (Xi'an) and later moved to Hezhou.¹¹ There is a legend about his origins. His grandfather Ma Congshan held a commission in the army of the Ming dynasty and had two sons. The elder of the two, Ma Bangjun was a successful trader who operated across northern China from Henan through Shaanxi and Gansu to Qinghai. The second son went into the military and by the time he was nearly forty years of age still had no family. In 1671, Khoja Hedaye Tong Laixi, a Sufi preacher who claimed to be a twenty fifth generation descendant of the Prophet Mohammed was teaching in Qinghai and became something of a cult figure among the Muslims of the border regions.

Ma Jiajun desperately wanted a family and went with other Muslims to Xining in Qinghai in 1672 to hear the Khoja preach and ask for his prayers. The Khoja apparently told him that faith would bring him a bride if he only waited. Once back in Hezhou, he called on a twenty-six year old Han woman, Juhua (Chrysanthemum). Juhua had had several suitors but all had died before they could marry her and by the time Ma Jiajun came on the scene no-one dare risk marrying her. Ma Jiajun took this as a sign and because of her past, the family had no objection to the match in spite of the ethnic, religious and age differences. Ma Jiajun asked the Khoja to solemnise the marriage and their son was born towards the end of 1688 and given the name Abuduli Halimu (Abd'ul Karim). However not long after the birth, the family's shop was burned to the ground and Ma Jiajun felt that his son's destiny was ill-starred because he had arrived so late in his life and renamed him Ma Laichi (Latecomer Ma) to try to counter this.¹²

Ma Laichi travelled to the Middle East during the Yongzheng reign (1723–1735) of the Qing dynasty, including a crucial visit to Yemen, and on his return preached in the Hezhou area. There is a story that the power of his preaching converted crowds of former Buddhists in Qinghai to Islam. The converts built a mosque in the town of

10 Ma Tong (1983) p 221–222.

11 Ma Tong (1983) p 223.

12 Ma Tong (1983) p 223–4.

Shuerwan, a magnificent structure with carved stone and wood and full of colour and pictures. It was also named Multicoloured Mosque and Ma Laichi became known as the Master of the Multicoloured Mosque. Another was then built in the Bafang area of Linxia. When Ma Laichi died, the design of his tomb was based on the Multicoloured Mosque. The followers of the Multicoloured Mosque were most concentrated in Linxia and the neighbouring district of Xunhua, which was inhabited primarily by Salars, but were also scattered throughout Gansu, Ningxia, Qinghai and Xinjiang and probably numbered over 200,000.¹³

It has been suggested that it was the Salars who were initially most receptive to the evangelism of Ma Laichi. The Salars are an ethnic group speaking a Turkic language who trace their ancestry back to migrants from Samarkand during the Ming dynasty. Noted for their fierceness, they had settled in the inhospitable hills in what is now eastern Qinghai, and many traded by raft or by caravan or followed a military career. Although they intermarried with the Hui and other Muslim groups (but not with the Han) they retained their language and had closer contact with Central Asia than other Muslims in China.¹⁴ Tibetans also converted to Ma Laichi's brand of radical Islam.

Sufi Orders in China: Jahriyya

The Jahriyya (Zheherenye or Zhehelinye in Chinese) like the Khufiyya, a division of the Naqshbandi order of Sufism, is the most numerous and widely dispersed of the *menhuan* of China. Its religious authority has commanded a great deal of respect and it possibly has the longest pedigree of any of the *menhuan*. It is the main rival of the Khufiyya order and many of the episodes of intercommunal violence in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had their roots at least in part in the struggle between the two schools for supremacy. The Arabic word Jahriyya is translated by the Chinese as *gongkai* which means 'open,' 'overt' or 'public' and this group are also known as the Reading Aloud Sect *Gaonianpai* or Chanting Aloud Sect *Gaosongpai* as it was their custom to read or recite prayers and the *dhikr* aloud rather than silently as did other Sufi orders. In the early days of the order they were known to their rivals in the Huasi order as the Head Shaking Sect because they bent both

13 Ma Tong (1983) p 222–223; Trippner (1961) p 152–156 on the Multi-coloured Mosque and Trippner (1964) on the origins of the Salars.

14 Lipman (1981) p 13–16.

knees and shook both shoulders while reading the Qur'an. Their own preferred name for their order was the *Mingyang Zhengdao*, the Straight Path of Brightness Unfolding. The founding father of the Zheherenye was Ma Mingxin, known to his followers as *Daozu taiye* Greatest Master Path Founder. The term *daozu* used by Sufi orders to indicate the founding saint or *shaykh* is drawn from Chinese Daoist usage and is an example of the way Islam in China drew on the terminology of other religions to find appropriate terms. The Zheherenye has its origins in a Sufi order that flourished in the Yemen but Ma Mingxin was also influenced by other Sufi thinkers. The order he transmitted to China was known as the 'two surnames and three families,' in other words Ma of Jiezhou, Mu of Pingliang and Ma of Lingzhou and the spreading of his teachings began in 1745 and continues to this day.¹⁵

The founder, Ma Mingxin, had studied in Bukhara and the Yemen and returned to his home in Gansu in the eighteenth century, perhaps as early as 1761. He had become an ascetic under the influence of his Sufi mentors and led a life of the greatest austerity, wearing a plain woollen robe and existing on very little food or drink. His main contribution to Chinese Sufism was the introduction of the vocal *dhikr* or remembrance, which is less common in Naqshbandiyya Sufism than the silent *dhikr*. In Ma Mingxin's teaching, the *dhikr* was accompanied by prescribed movements of the head and body and special breathing techniques. Ma Mingxin established his base in Hezhou close to the power base of the Khufiyya orders. His teachings were more radical than the Khufiyya. He emphasised purity, disdain for material wealth and encouraged his followers not to pay fees for religious services given by the mosque clerics. At first he denied the right of the leadership of a *menhuan* to be passed on by hereditary since the leadership of the Multicoloured Mosque *menhuan* had passed to Ma Laichi's son.

The influence of the Jahriyya in China began in Xunhua in Qinghai and Hezhou (Linxia) in Gansu and expanded into Ningxia (Yinchuan), Lingwu, Xiji, Guyuan and Haiyuan in present day Ningxia and from there to eastern and southern Gansu, Xinjiang, Yunnan, Hebei, Jilin and Shandong. One of Ma Mingxin's major achievements was his conversion of a group of Salars in Xunhua in eastern Qinghai. Disputes with the authorities and with the Khufiyya over this conversion led to what became known as the Salar revolt of 1781.¹⁶

15 Ma Tong (1983) p 362-3; Mian Weilin (1981) p 58-100.

16 See Trippner 1964.

Doctrinal disputes between the Khufiyya and the Jahriyya were particularly bitter among the Salars and were the subject of a number of legal challenges in the local courts and the cause of street battles. In a bid to curb the turmoil, the local authorities arrested Ma Mingxin and imprisoned him in Lanzhou. Xinzhu, Adjutant General at Lanzhou, was dispatched to capture Ma's followers, but he was ambushed by a Salar band led by Su Sishisan (Su Forty-three) and killed. The Salars then attacked Lanzhou which they had reached using their hide rafts. In panic, the authorities executed Ma Mingxin. Su Sishisan and his band dug themselves in on the mountains to the west of Lanzhou and it took three months and the drafting in of extra Tibetan and Mongols troops to suppress them. Su Sishisan was killed and many of Ma Mingxin's family and followers also perished between 1781 and 1783.¹⁷

Tian Wu, a Hui Ahong of the Jahriyya had a base in the highlands north of the Wei river. In 1784, three years after Ma Mingxin's death, he led a band of Jahriyya followers against the local Qing authorities. Tian was killed early in the fighting, but the insurrection lasted several months and led to a severe prohibition on Jahriyya activities. The construction of new mosques was prohibited and Muslims were forbidden to convert non-Muslims or adopt non-Muslim children.¹⁸

Although the Jahriyya was persecuted and prohibited and its followers massacred by the government of the Qing dynasty, it was tenacious enough to survive and was even strengthened by the oppression it suffered so that it remained an important force against ethnic and religious repression. After the massacre of Muslims in 1781-3, the order could only maintain its existence underground. It became an important focus for disenchanted Muslims and Jahriyya networks quietly developed in the period from 1784 to 1862 when there were no major grassroots Muslim uprisings against the Qing.

One group of 30,000 Jahriyya adherents identified in the early years of the Republic traced their origins back to the deportation of Ma Mingxin's widow and his surviving daughter to Yining (Ili, also known as Ghulja) in Xinjiang, the two other daughters having committed suicide en route. Ma Mingxin's widow was given as a

17 Ma Tong (1983) p 363-388; Aubin (1990) p 520-524; Lipman (1981) p 18-21. Lipman p 13, 23 illustrates how Muslims used the court system to try to resolve doctrinal differences.

18 Lipman (1981) p 21-23.

concubine to a Manchu official, killed him when he was drunk and was herself put to death. His daughter married and founded a line of Jahriyya members in Xinjiang and a *gongbei* was erected in Ma Mingxin's memory.¹⁹

In the southwest of China, the order was maintained by the fanatical devotion of Ma Mingxin's disciples. Ma Shunqing, Ma Mingxin's eldest son was condemned to hard labour in the mines of Yunnan province. His third son Ma Shilin became an Ahong and he and his family were sheltered and protected by supporters of the Jahriyya. Ma Shilin's son, Ma Yuanzhang also succeeded to the leadership of the order. The leaders of the order in Yunnan made their living out of a combination of agriculture and, especially, commerce, the same mixture that also succeeded in the northwest of China with the Xidaotang.²⁰

The next significant leader of the Jahriyya in the northwest was Ma Hualong who was at the head of the order for twenty two years up to the massacre of 1871. From some time in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, the headquarters of the Jahriyya had moved from the centre of Gansu further north to the region south of Yinchuan in the present day Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. The *daotang* of the order was built at Jinjibao (near present-day Wuzhong) and under the guidance of Ma Yide the fourth generation successor and Ma Hualong the fifth generation leader, the Jahriyya emerged from the shadows. The leading family had become wealthy as a result of their participation in the caravan trade in Inner Mongolia between Baotou, Guihua (Hohhot) and Beijing. On the caravan trail, they recruited many disciples to their order, eventually acquiring a military force of over a thousand men, commanded by Ma Hualong. 'Charisma, Qur'anic erudition, commerce, secular authority and military power' all important attributes to the Jahriyya and often found together in their leadership were typified by the generation of Ma Hualong who took part in the risings that flared up between 1862 and 1873.²¹

Ma Hualong was so active in proselytising that he has sometimes been seen as the founder of an independent school of Sufism but his thinking was in the tradition of the founding father Ma Mingxin.

19 Ma Tong (1983) p 363-388; Lipman (1981) p 21-4.

20 Ma Tong (1983) p 363-388; Jianping Wang (1996) p 178-9. Françoise Aubin has commented on how remarkable it was that 'this alliance of commerce and religious management, normal in middle eastern Islam is also found in Chinese Islam even though it goes against Chinese customs.' Aubin (1990) p 520-524.

21 Aubin (1990) p 533.

Jonathan Lipman has argued convincingly that he should not be looked on as a fanatical *mujahid*, a secessionist or even 'inherently anti-Qing.' Jinjibao became an extremely important and prosperous religious centre under his tutelage and it was one of the centres of the great Hui rising that broke out in 1862 and the main target for Zuo Zongtang, who was charged with recovering the region for the Qing dynasty. Ma Hualong died in the fall of Jinjibao and there is some doubt about the exact date and manner of his end. Accounts dating back to the rising have him executed on the orders of Zuo Zongtang and this is most likely the way he met his end, but according to an alternative tradition he was murdered by a traitor in the town.²²

Tombs and Religious Foundations

In addition to the *jiaofang* which were usually associated with mosques of the *Gedimu* tradition, the *menhuan* system of hereditary religious leaders developed in the northwest from the Ming dynasty and throughout the Qing, some of the *menhuan* developing a *daotang* system with large religious complexes built to attract followers and extend the power of the religious leaders. The religious leaders were not only the highest religious authorities in their area, but also the symbol of temporal power. The *daotang* were not only for worship, studying religious doctrine, expounding the scriptures and spreading the faith, they had also become the headquarters of an integrated politico-religious system. *Daotang* complexes included the hall (*daotang*) for explaining religious doctrine, a mosque, tombs (*gongbei*), residences, guest rooms, kitchen, office, school etc, usually on a large scale.

The Jahriyya or Zheherenye developed a network of these *daotang*, the most important of which is at Honglefu in Ningxia and can still be seen today. The Honglefu *daotang* is several *li* to the northwest of the site of Jinjibao, one of the centres of the 1869 Hui rising, and near to the what is today the thriving market town of Wuzhong. It is controlled by the descendants of Ma Hualong one of the rebel leaders in the town and the man regarded by Zuo Zongtang as the most serious threat to imperial power. Zuo had him executed on March 2 1871 along with his son, Ma Yaobang, and over eighty rebel 'officials.' According to local tradition, Ma Hualong was buried here and so a *gongbei* was established. There is a rival and alternative tradition that Ma Hualong's true *gongbei* is in Zhangquanchuan.

22 Aubin (1990) p 533-4; Lipman (1991) p 25-6.

It is not clear how large the original *daotang* was. It was rebuilt in 1922–3 by Ma Xi'en and his son Ma Zhenwu came to be religious leader (*jiaozhu*). This *daotang* is fifty years older than the Xiji *daotang* in the Guyuan region of southern Ningxia, and at major religious festivals, important people from among the followers of the order in Yunnan, Xinjiang and elsewhere congregate here, with a total of several thousands attending, staying either in the residential part of the *daotang* or in the houses of local villagers. The present day complex is spacious and well kept. It has a *daotang*, *gongbei*, garden, guest rooms, bath-house, kitchen and accountant's office. The *daotang* is in use today with followers of the Jahriyya order in residence and the tombs of the *shaykhs* are well cared for. The mostly young men who were present in the *daotang* during my visit in 1991 were reluctant to have any contact with me or my Hui academic colleagues.²³

The Jahriyya spread throughout northwestern China and was less prone to splintering than the other Sufi orders. However it did subsequently split into two streams known as the Guanchuan system and the Lingzhou system. Later, the Guanchuan divided into two *menhuan*, the Beishan (Northern Mountain) and the Shagou (Sandy Gully) and the Lingzhou broke up into the Nanchuan (Southern Stream) and Banqiao (Plank Bridge) *menhuan*.²⁴

Sufi Orders in China: Qadariyya

The Qadariyya or *Gadelinye* 嘎的林耶 is one of the largest Sufi networks with members throughout the Arab world and Central Asia. Tradition has it that the order in China was founded by a twenty-ninth generation successor of the Prophet, Khoja Abdul Dong Laxi. He came to China to 'teach the three schools,' the three being Qimen, Xianmen and Guangmen. The Guangmen was the Guangdemen of Xi'an whose founding saint was called Ma. Xianmen was the *menhuan* of Xian Meizhen of Qinghai, which, although originally Qadariyya, was also influenced by other Sufi teachings. It regarded its teachings as being close to those of the Khufiyya and is therefore usually included in with Khufiyya family, but is in fact closer to the Qadariyya tradition. The Qimen is the Qidao tradition of

23 Liu Zhiping (ed) *Zhongguo Yisilanjiao jianzhu Xinjiang renmin chubanshe* 1982 p 180; Chu (1966) p 129 – 142; Personal observation Friday March 15, 1991.

24 Gao Zhanfu (1990) p 188.

Linxia in Gansu. The mystical thought of Qadariyya is almost impenetrable and after it entered China, it also came under the influence of Chinese culture and thought and evolved into a distinctive sect.²⁵ Orders of the Qadariyya included the Great Tomb *menhuan* (*Da gongbei*) and six or seven others.

Sufi Orders in China: Kubrawiyya

The Kubrawiyya (*Kuburenye* or *Kubulinye*) is one branch of Sufism which traces the foundation of its order back in China to the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). There is no sound historical justification for going so far back, but an examination of the tables of inheritors of the tradition suggests that it is at least as old as the Kangxi (1662–1722) or Qianlong (1736–1795) reigns of the Qing dynasty. As has already been shown above, the Kubrawiyya order has its origins in thirteenth century Bukhara, so a Ming pedigree for its appearance in China is by no means impossible.

Tradition has it that the man who brought Kubrawiyya Sufism to China was a descendant of the Prophet Mohammed called Muhuyindeni, who shared the name of a sixth century legendary miracle worker. Muhuyindeni is said to have visited China three times. The first visit was to preach in the area that is now Guangdong and Guangxi, the second to Hunan and Hubei and finally through Xinjiang to Qinghai, Gansu and Henan. He finally settled in the Dongxiang region in a village called Dawantou. The story goes that by the time Muhuyindeni reached Linxia he was very poor and villagers of the Zhang lineage in Dawantou made him a present of nine *mu* of land. In this way he was transformed from a missionary traveller into a resident self-sufficient member of the Dongxiang community. He changed his surname to Zhang as all the residents of Dawantou were Zhangs and became known as Zhang Yuhuang with the *hao* or style of Puji. The name of his order was known afterwards as the Zhangmen, the Zhang *menhuan*. The Zhang's in Dawantou were divided into two villages, the Zhangs of Yinwa embraced Islam and returned to the Dawantou *menhuan*, whereas the Zhangs of Yangwa village remained loyal to Han beliefs and many later migrated to Tangwang. Before 1949, in spite of their differences in religious belief, both groups, Han and Hui would share the lighting of a bonfire and a get-together in the first month of the Chinese New

25 Ma Tong (1983) p 328; Mian Weilin (1981) p 101–117.

Year. To this day, the Zhangs of Tangwan acknowledge the Zhangs of Dawantou as part of their roots. On Muhuyindeni's third visit to China he also brought with him his two sons. One later returned home but the other, Aiheinaiti Kebiruo Baihedaji went with his father to Dawantou. Muhuyindeni became the presiding Ahong at the Dawantou mosque when it was established. It is said that although he could speak some Chinese, he had no knowledge of the Dongxiang language, which belongs to the Turkic family, and had to communicate entirely in Qur'anic Arabic. This was only possible between the Ahong and the Manla, the congregation as a whole being unable to understand his religious teachings.²⁶

Muhuyindeni died in Dongxiang and is buried at Dawantou. His son Aiheinaiti Kebiruo Baihedaji succeeded as the presiding Ahong at the Dawantou mosque. During his tenure, his enthusiasm increased the size of the congregation, but the conversion of the Yinwa Hans to Islam roused the opposition of some people who reported them to the local government as heretics. Officials accused him of violating the law and corrupting good people and threw him into prison where not long after he died. His followers in Dawantou built a *gongbei* there for him and this was burned to the ground by Guomindang troops in 1928.

Aiheinaiti Kebiruo Baihedaji had five sons. After his death in prison, the five sons were banished, the two older going to Kangle Caotan, the third to Shuimochuan where he became a Lama and was buried in Huanghewan, the fourth was taken into custody in Xi'an and later released and allowed to return home. He was called Aibu Wusimanai and he later inherited his fathers mantle, becoming the third principal Ahong of the Zhangmen order. however he was not as learned as his father and his standing in the community was far lower.²⁷

Although this story is based on an oral tradition it is convincing as a paradigm for the establishment of Muslim communities anywhere in China, as it encapsulates the problems that the communities encountered from the earliest of times: the settlement in China of foreign Muslims who become part of the local population; the attendant language complications; the growth of a community; the establishment of a mosque; religious persecution; the death of a *shaykh* and the building of a *gongbei* in his memory; the succession of a son or other close family member as Ahong.

26 Ma Tong (1983) p 451-3; Gao Zhanfu (1990) p 198-199.

27 Ma Tong (1983) p 453-4.

These few *menhuan* are just a few examples of the many religious orders that have developed within Chinese Islam and are intended to demonstrate the reasons for the division of Islamic organisations and the motivation for creating *menhuan*.

Sects and Sufism (3): The Xidaotang

The Xidaotang 西道堂, or Hall of the Western Pathway¹ is perhaps the most distinctively Chinese of all the Islamic sects in China. Its theology was based on a number of texts written in Chinese and known collectively in Chinese as the *Han ketabu*, the *Han kitab*, an interesting Sino-Muslim collocation as *Han* is Chinese for Chinese and *kitab* (transliterated as *ketabu* in Chinese) the Arabic word for book. Because its followers relied primarily on religious texts translated into or written in Chinese rather than the Arabic originals, they were sometimes known as the Sinological Sect, the *Hanxuepai*.

Lintan (Taozhou)

The origins of the Xidaotang are tied very closely to one specific location, the Old City of the town now known as Lintan, south of the city of Linxia in southwestern Gansu province. It was a strange sect with no obvious parallels in Islamic communities outside China and had two groups of followers. The core group lived within the Hall itself, four hundred families or just over a thousand people following a communal lifestyle. The majority of the sect's members who may have amounted to over ten thousand at the height of its strength lived in their own families, scattered throughout the villages and towns of Gansu, Qinghai and Xinjiang. In this chapter the origins of

1 The translation of Xidaotang is problematic and illustrates some of the difficulties of interpreting Islamic names and terms in Chinese. The three characters *xi*, *dao* and *tang* respectively mean 'west'; the 'way' (and also the Dao in Daoism with parallels to the Arabic word *tariqa* or pathway); and 'hall.' However, the last two, *daotang*, are used together in Islamic texts to mean the residence of a *shaykh* and the centre for Sufi teaching and worship after his death. To avoid opting for one of the possible translations, I have retained the Chinese name in this book.

the sect are described in often mundane detail. It is extremely important to examine the gradual evolution of a group such as the Xidaotang as it emerged on the basis of its opposition to imperial authority and to other Islamic groups as it gives vital clues as to why the members of the group behaved in the way they did.

Lintan was known in the past as Taozhou. Like many towns in northwest China it was divided into an old and a new city, reflecting the growth of the town and usually the military control established over it by a new dynasty.² The old and new parts of Lintan were 60 *li* or about half a kilometre apart. Its role for centuries was as a 'neighbour of the Tibetans,' and since the Tang dynasty it has been an important market town for trade between the Han and Hui to the east on the one hand and the Tibetans and the Qiang to the west on the other. Prosperity brought a degree of culture and an educational level that was unusually high for such a remote border region.³

Islam in Lintan as in so many other parts of China can be traced back to the early years of the Ming conquest of China. The new town in Lintan dates back to the twelfth year of the reign of the Ming Hongwu emperor 1379 and the garrison town established by the western expeditionary forces of Mu Ying to bring the western regions under the control of the new dynasty during what was known as the rebellion of the eighteen barbarian chieftains. Local tradition has it that most of the troops sent to settle and garrison the region were Muslims and certainly the first Muslim settlement dates from this time. There is some confusion about the date of the founding of the first mosque. The *Taozhou tingzhi* records its construction in the *dingwei* year of the Hongwu reign. There is unfortunately no such year and the next *dingwei* year is 1427. Two possibilities suggest themselves. 1379, the year in which Mu Ying's armies arrived was a *jiwei* year and the first character could have been transcribed wrongly, or the mosque could have been built even before the arrival of Ming Taizu's colonial army in 1367, the previous *dingwei* year. Since the mosque was built in the old town rather than the new garrison town, this is not impossible. It seems safe to say that there was a mosque in Lintan from the early years of the Ming dynasty.⁴

2 For example Yinchuan, the capital of Ningxia, today has districts known as Jiucheng (Old Town), Xincheng (New Town) and Xinshiqu (New Urban Area) and an area and bus stop known as the Junqu (Military District).

3 Ma Tong (1983) p 155-156.

4 Ma Tong (1983) p 154.

Sufism in Lintan

In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Islamic sectarianism and Sufi orders had spread throughout much of China, but Lintan, isolated both from the mainstream of Chinese culture and from the mainstream of Chinese Islam and sparsely populated was hardly affected by these movements. This changed in 1777 when Ma Laichi, the founding father of the Multicoloured Mosque (*huasi*) order of Sufism preached the doctrines of his Khufiyya order in the Muslim centres of Xunhua in Qinghai and Hezhou in Gansu. Lintan Muslims gradually switched their allegiance to the Multicoloured Mosque order, the earliest being followers of the Taiping zhai and the Zhuoluo Lower Mosque *menhuan*.⁵

By the time of the third generation successor to Ma Laichi, Ma Guangzong, the Multicoloured Mosque was already in decline. Ma Guangzong's student *ahong*, Ma Baozhan left the order and founded his own *menhuan* following the teachings of a Khufiyya Sufi order from Yarkand in Xinjiang. He preached in Beizhuang in Dongxiang and the order later became known as the Beizhuang *menhuan*. A group of the followers of the Multicoloured Mosque in Lintan defected to the Beizhuang order and Mao Baozhan sent Min Shangli as his *muleti* or murid (disciple) of their order in the Old City of Lintan. Min died in the Old City and after his death a *gongbei* was built there. His son Min Yonglu took over as murid and his son Min Shida followed him. Min Shida had no son, but two daughters and one of these daughters was given as a wife to one Ma Yuan, father of Ma Qixi who was to found the Xidaotang. Ma Yuan had another son, who took the name Min Zhongxin and returned to the Min family to inherit the murid's role from Min Shida. Min Shida's other daughter became the wife of a man called Li in the Old City and had two sons. One of the sons retained the surname Li, but the other was known as Min Zhongqing and handed over to the Min family and the Beizhuang order.⁶

This complex family tree reveals the importance of family inter-connections in the development of religious orders in Chinese Islam. Ma Qixi, the Xidaotang founder, was a follower of the Beizhuang Sufi *menhuan* and the nephew of the Beizhuang murid. As a young man, he taught at the school attached to the *gongbei* of the old Beizhuang murid Min Shida.⁷

5 Ma Tong (1983) p 156-157.

6 Ma Tong (1983) p 157.

7 Ma Tong (1983) p 157-8.

Lintan during the Hui Rebellions

The new sect emerged in a period of social and ethnic conflict. In May 1862, at the time of the Hui uprisings in Shaanxi, eastern Gansu and Qinghai, tension between the Hui and Han population of Lintan was high and there was an atmosphere of near panic. A notorious bandit chief, Qi'angarong, probably a Tibetan, who had been in the custody of the headman (*tusi*) of Zhuoni got out of prison. It is not clear whether he was released or escaped, but the headman Yang Yuan said that it had been an escape and that as Qi'angarong was a convicted brigand, any robberies he committed outside Zhuoni could not be the responsibility of Yang's office. Rumours spread that Qi'angarong was intending to stir up trouble between the Hui, Han and Tibetan people and use this as a cover for driving the Han and Hui off their land and seizing their property. After Qi'angarong's escape, a mob attacked a Hui village called Yaozalazhi and when the Hui villagers complained to the authorities in Taozhou, they were told that as Qi'angarong was an escaped bandit there was nothing they could do and refused to hear their petition. Two Hui men, Ma Fang and Ding Zhongxuan led an angry mob of Lintan Hui to kidnap civil and military officials and their official seals and occupied the Old and New Cities of Lintan, claiming that they were acting in solidarity with the rising of the Shaanxi Hui against the Qing, although their action was more for their protection against attacks by Han and Tibetan gangs than an overtly political movement. Yang Yuan, the headman mobilised his Tibetan troops and blockaded the Tao river by stationing armed units on both banks. The Han community had the same idea, armed themselves and sought sanctuary behind stockades and new fortifications. Sporadic three-way intercommunal violence followed, leading to some deaths.⁸

'Qing forces under Cao Kezhong approached Taozhou on 26th First Month 1866 and Mu Mafang led a crowd of Hui, young and old, men and women, and begged that they be allowed to surrender. Cao demanded that the captured officials and their seals be brought to his camp and that the principal culprits should be bound and handed over to him. He further ordered that the Hui hand over weapons, cattle, horses and grain for his troops and fodder for their mounts. Only then would he be prepared to consider their surrender... Twenty eight of the main culprits, including the Hui official Ding Zhongxuan and the Hui

8 Ma Tong (1983) p 158.

villagers Ding Zhongliao and Li Si and his five sons were handed over in chains. 1,652 cavalry horses and tens of thousands of knives, pikes, arrows, pitchforks and firearms and 190 head of cattle used for ploughing and 400 dan [hectolitre] of grain for the troops were handed over. Cao Kezhong interrogated Ding Zhongxuan and the others, executed them and displayed their severed heads as a warning. Weapons and horses were distributed among the various camps, the cattle given to the Han villagers who had been harmed and grain distributed to the hungry. Cao then personally directed a search of every household in the camps, not leaving a single inch of iron. Hui from outside the area were all ordered to leave and the inhabitants of the town made to establish a *baojia* system and select a *baozhang* and *paitou* for mutual guarantees.⁹ This ensured a period of relative peace and harmony between the Han, Hui and Tibetan communities.⁹

In the eleventh month of the same year the men nicknamed the Thirteen Hui Brothers of Taozhou (butchers and martial arts practitioners) with the backing of the Taozhou Commander Ding Yong'an who was a Hui, killed the Old City commandant and threatened his deputy Feng Guangming and teacher Liu Shengqiu and murdered ten or so Han families in the city. The New and Old cities of Taozhou, Taipingzhai, Wangjiazui, Qianjiazhai and Lamachuan were all occupied by Huis.

The commandant Ding Yong'an was living outside the walls of the old city and pretended not to be involved saying he had no forces available to intervene. However, soon after the Thirteen Hui Brothers had taken over the walls and moats of the old and new city, Ding was installed in the New City. He adopted conciliatory policies towards the Han and Tibetan communities and pledged his commitment to peaceful relations. However the Han gentry did not go along with this and prepared to link up with Tibetans to attack the Hui and came to an agreement with the *tusi* Yang Yuan. The Han massed their militia at Machanggou and the Tibetans came to support them.¹⁰

After he had mustered his militia, Yang Yuan sent a message to the Hui, saying, 'If the Han attack you Hui, we Tibetans will not send our troops to intervene. You had better defend yourselves.' When the Hui heard this, they rushed to Machanggou Bridge, drew their

⁹ *Ping Hui zhi* (Record of the Pacification of the Hui) Volume 3 in Ma Tong (1983) p 158-159. *Baozhang* and *paitou* were officials in the *Baojia* system of maintaining public order.

¹⁰ Ma Tong (1983) p 159.

weapons and fought the Han militia, defeating them and leaving heavy casualties. A rhyme current at the time went:

It took less than a day
For the Hui to slay
Eighteen hundred Han militia.

The Han militia then asked for the Lintao Blackhead Irregulars (*heitou yong* a defence corps organised by the Han landowners) to be sent to protect the Han areas on the banks of the Tao river in preparation for another attack by the Hui. The Hui forces outnumbered the Blackhead Irregulars and were a more disciplined force so the Irregulars dare not fight and there was a stalemate. Some of the Irregulars then went off to rob the Han villages and rape the women and girls and the Han decided they were better off with the devil they knew, sent the Lintao Blackhead Irregulars back to Lintao, and made peace with the Hui.¹¹

In the sixth month of 1867, Fan Ming, a lieutenant-colonel in the Qing army recaptured the Old and New Towns of Taozhou and the villages of Taipingzhai and Qianjiazhai with the help of the Taozhou sub-prefect and the *tusi* Yang Yuan.¹² All these areas surrendered to government forces, but anti-Qing feeling and intercommunal violence continued. When Qing troops withdrew from Lintan, the Hui rose again and occupied the town. Their strategy has been described as 'resist then capitulate, conciliate then oppose' and kept the area in a state of tension and instability for many years.¹³

In the seventh month of 1871, Zuo Zongtang's armies moved into Hezhou. Ma Zhan'ao surrendered and Ding Yongan led his supporters to sue for peace. Cao Kezhong, an officer under Zuo's command, ordered the Hui and Han back to their villages and Ding Yongan helped Cao. He and Ma Zhan'ao and his son had the same approach. They blamed their supporters for starting the rising and turned against them. A bloody repression followed and they were promoted and rewarded by the Qing government.¹⁴

In 1895, Ma Yonglin of the Multicoloured Mosque Sufi order mobilised crowds of Hui, Dongxiang, Baoan and Salars in an uprising against the Qing in Xunhua, Qinghai. Brigadier-General (*zongbing*) Tang Yanhe of Hezhou sent troops to crush the rebellion.

11 Ma Tong (1983), p 160.

12 *Ping Hui zhi*, *juan* 4 in Ma Tong (1983), p 160.

13 Ma Tong (1983) p 160.

14 Ma Tong (1983) p 161.

Ma Yonglin and another of the leaders of the rising, Ma Fuwang, hatched a plot to trap Tan in the twin cities of Lintan. They launched a surprise attack and inflicted heavy defeats on his forces. Tang and a dozen or so of his followers fled to Gan'nan, the frontier area between southwestern Gansu and Tibet protected by two Hui brothers, Ma Fuxiang and Ma Fulu, and nearing the Old City of Lintan, were ambushed by insurrectionary forces led by the Ahong Min Sigezi. Ma Fulu collaborated with Ding Zhongyuan one of the Lintan gentry and bribed over a hundred cattle and sheep dealers to guard Tang and help him flee by night to southeastern Gansu so that he could make his way to Lanzhou and safety.

When the Ma Yonglin rising was suppressed, the Qing government, as part of its divide and rule policy, ordered Ma Anliang to deal with the rebels. Ma Anliang had Min Sigezi and other leading rebels executed in Hezhou and allowed minor participants to buy their lives with gifts. The Hui population of Hezhou and Lintan was divided with some of the wealthy landowners taking the side of the Qing.¹⁵

Ma Qixi and the Foundation of the Xidaotang

It was during this time of turmoil as the Qing dynasty drew to a close and China was racked by poverty and famine, peasant risings and the Sino-Japanese war that the Xidaotang emerged. The founder of the sect, Ma Qixi was a native of Wangjiazui village in Lintan. His father, Ma Yuan, was an Ahong who was too poor to marry off his daughter, and who therefore took in the *muleti* (murid) of the Beizhuang Sufi *menhuan* as his son in law. On the twelfth of the seventh month 1857, Ma Yuan had a son whom he named Heiya (Black teeth). this was later changed to Shengchun and, when he went to school, to Ma Qixi. Ma Qixi was the second son but his older brother died young and he became the family's heir. As a child he was bright and hard-working and his early education was in a school run by the mosque in Lintan Old City. When he was eleven or twelve years old, he attended a privately run school in the Old City, but because it was not stretching him, he was sent to a different school in the New City where the curriculum was based on the Four Books and Five Classics of the mainstream Chinese Confucian tradition. Marked out as talented and diligent he came second in the Taozhou examinations and fourth in the examinations for the *xiuca*i degree,

15 Ma Tong (1983), p 161.

the first level of the imperial examinations and frequently equated to a bachelors degree, in Gongchang (present day Longxi). After this he closeted himself in his study and studied Confucian philosophy and the writings of the Muslim scholar Liu Zhi by himself.¹⁶ For the leader of an Islamic order in China, he was exceptionally well educated in the Confucian classics. It is significant that he was a follower of the teachings of Liu Zhi, who had, more than any other Chinese Muslim thinker, pioneered the use of Confucian terminology to explain and expound Islamic doctrine.

In 1891, Ma Qixi opened his own private school at West Phoenix Hill. He taught the standard Confucian classics but included lessons on Islamic teachings for both Hui and Han pupils and the courses were attractive enough for the number of pupils to grow to over one hundred. At the same time, he established a centre for meditation and spiritual improvement in a nearby cave house. The following year the timetable of the school was arranged so that there was study in the morning and rest in the afternoon which gave rise to the quip among his rivals that 'In Ma's school the teacher meditates and the pupils sleep.' Student numbers began to decline, possibly because Hui students generally demanded a more rigorous environment and he finally closed it down in 1896. The following year, Ma Hanzhang, a member of the Multicoloured Mosque brotherhood who was also a *xiucaï*, set up a rival school.

Ma Qixi opened a new school at the Dazigou *gongbei* of the Beizhuang *menhuan* in Lintan Old City in 1898. At first only relatives and close friends attended, but he gradually acquired a reputation because of his facility in 'the Hui and Han written languages,' Arabic and Persian as well as Chinese, and his powers of communication. At that time, two factions of the Beizhuang brotherhood were in dispute, primarily over the question of whether or not shoes should be worn during funeral rites. The Beizhuang *muleti* (murid) Min Yonglu, in an attempt to mediate, ruled that removing shoes was more correct, but that not to do so did not constitute a violation of the ruled of the brotherhood. This did not satisfy diehards in the order as removing shoes was one of its old rules and they were adamant that it be retained. Ma Qixi accused Min Yonglu of vacillation and argued that there could only be one rule and that as *muleti*, Min should make the decision. Min disagreed and the dispute worsened. In 1901, Ma Qixi moved out of the Dazigou *gongbei* and broke away entirely from the

16 Ma Tong (1983) p 162-3.

Beizhuang *menhuan* and the Upper Mosque (*Shangsi*) where it was based and set up his own independent school.¹⁷

Ma Qixi differed from most of the Hui scholars and divines at the time in that his teachings were based primarily on Islamic texts in the Chinese language, including the writings of Wang Daiyu and Liu Zhi which the Ahongs of the Beizhuang and Multicoloured Mosque orders could not allow. They accepted only the Qur'an and works in Arabic as true scripture and did not consider that a *xiucai* graduate could teach Islam authoritatively or comprehensively. They accused him of heresy and dishonesty. They claimed that he told his followers, 'If you join my sect and give me money, you will see hell in the left sleeve and heaven in the right.' *Hajji* Ding, the main Ahong of the Beizhuang Changlachuan mosque ruled that anyone who ate with Ma Qixi or allowed him to slaughter their animals would be deemed to be an apostate and would have to be readmitted to the faith if he wanted to be considered a Muslim. Ma Qixi was isolated for a time and one of his supporters, Dan Fude, went to the mosque with a knife furious at the claim that Ma was a heretic. The Ahong backed off, fearing a bloody confrontation, and the *Shaykh* of the Beizhuang order, Ershifu (Second Master) made a special journey from Dongxiang to the Changlachuan mosque where he stayed for some time and tried to end the conflict.

Ma Qixi's main supporter, Ding Quande, in an attempt to bring the confrontation to a head, took a chicken to the Changlachuan Ahong, *Hajji* Ding and asked him to slaughter it but was refused and Ding Quande asked Ershifu to mediate between the opposing parties. Ershifu's response was to replace the Ahong of the divided Shangsi mosque with a trusted supporter, Ma Tianen and to arrange for a meeting of then senior village elders, *xianglao*, led by Ma Tianen, specifically to counter the influence of Ma Qixi. When Ma Anliang, the Gansu warlord and a disciple of the Multicoloured Mosque *menhuan*, learned of the dispute, he tried to use Ma Qixi to attack the rival Beizhuang *menhuan*. He had Ma Qixi brought to Hezhou, received him with great pomp and ceremony and is reported to have said, 'If you bring out the two craftsmen (the stonemason Ding Quande and the cobbler Dan Fude), I can knife the Beizhuang.' Ma Qixi refused tactfully, saying that he was trying to encourage people to behave well and follow the rules. When Ma Anliang saw that he could not be persuaded, he allowed him to preach in his old home

¹⁷ Ma Tong (1983) p 163-164.

town of Dahejia in Hezhou for three weeks before returning to Lintan.¹⁸

There were constant doctrinal disputes and conflicts between the followers of the Beizhuang *menhuan* and the Multicoloured Mosque in the old city of Lintan. The Beizhuang were more numerous so the Multicoloured Mosque people usually lost out. Ma Anliang continued to incite Ma Qixi to attack the Beizhuang *menhuan* and finally persuaded Min Hanzhang, a *xiuca*i who lived in the Old City to attack Ma. Min took the post of secretary to Ma Anliang, with the picturesque title of Private Secretary of the Red Brush *hongbi shiye*. Since he was a follower of the Multicoloured Mosque and was also a notable Hui landlord and scholar of his day, he was aware that Ma Qixi's activities seriously threatened him and was already turning against Ma's plans. However he had no powerful backer and did not dare to act recklessly. Once Ma Anliang appeared on the scene as a patron, this fitted neatly into his schemes and he launched an offensive against Ma Qixi.¹⁹

Min Hanzhang began to use outflanking tactics to attack Ma Qixi. He put up two members of the Upper Mosque Min Zhongyuan and Ding Youbu to cross swords with Ma Qixi's followers, plotting from behind the scenes. In 1903, at his instigation, they spread a rumour that Ershifu of the Beizhuang Mosque had authority for succession as head of the order and said that the Lintan Beizhuang *menhuan* would not believe Ma Qixi's deceit. Min Zhongyuan and Ding Youbu also agreed to 'gather at night and disperse at dawn, form a clique and establish an alliance, spread confusion and secretly reporting Ma Qixi to the Five Great Officials in Lanzhou.'²⁰ At the same time, Min Hanzhang was colluding with the Taozhou sub-prefect Zeng Linshou and produced a rough draft of a proclamation of several sheets which he persuaded his nephew (his sister's son) Wang Duoxi and his sister's younger brother Ma Sanqi to take to Zeng, so that Zeng would post them on the streets in his official capacity. The gist of the proclamation was that the new sect founded by Ma Mingxin (the Jahriyya *Zheherenye* Sufi order) was establishing a new sect to 'trick good people and harm Muslims' and was doing it secretly and furtively. It called for him to be investigated and dealt with severely if it were found to be true. After the proclamation was

18 Ma Tong (1983), p 164-165.

19 Ma Tong (1983) p 165-6.

20 Ma Tong (1983) p 166.

posted, Min Hanzhang warned Min Zhongyuan and Ding Youbu son that if Ma Qixi found out what had happened and blamed him, he would blame the two of them and say they were acting in defiance of his wishes. He then went to Ma Qixi and told him of the accusation that had been made and that it was not he, Min Hanzhang who had made it.

Over a month later, the provincial government in Lanzhou sent written instructions to the Taozhou office prohibiting the formation of the new sect. Ma Qixi then urged Ding Quande and Dan Fude to make a complaint to the authorities in Lanzhou about Min Zhongyuan and the others. The Lanzhou provincial authorities sent an official to Taozhou to investigate and deal with the situation in conjunction with the sub-prefect Zeng Linshou. On the sixth day of the sixth month of the twenty ninth year of the Guangxu reign, 1903, court proceedings began and the accused were interrogated. Ding Quande and Dan Fude were flogged with a hundred strokes of the cane, Ma Qixi and Ding Zhongming received forty and fifty blows respectively and their followers from other provinces were ordered to return that day to the places where they were registered. Ding Quande and others were imprisoned. Ma Qixi's followers refused to comply and his disciples including Ma Desheng, Ma Shi'an and Min Xueli were reported to the authorities in Lanzhou.²¹

A military officer, Cui Zhengwu, himself a Hui, and the Taozhou sub prefect Zhang Yandi were sent to investigate. In the end the case was reversed and Ding Quande and the others were released. The opposing factions were told that 'both should return to their own mosques and were not permitted to stir up trouble.'

Ma Qixi and Min Hanzhang after crossing swords many times gradually became reconciled. Ma Qixi formally established a *daotang* and proposed that the believers go into partnership in trade and farming to open up the uncultivated areas on the upper reaches of the Tao River. Some of the believers such as Feng Zhenglong, Min Xueli and Ding Zhongming handed back all or half of their family property to the *daotang* and began to live a communal life. They divided their time between farming and trading and their standard of living improved.²²

In 1904 (the thirtieth year of the Guangxu reign) on the first day of the second month of the old agricultural calendar, Ma Qixi and his

21 Ma Tong (1983) p 166-7.

22 Ma Tong (1983) p 167.

pupils raised funds to build a mosque at West Phoenix hill (*Xifengshan*). At that time, Min Hanzhang was inciting Min Zhongyuan and others to muster a group of people who were prepared to manufacture a dispute to split the mosque. The local commander, Liu Zuoyuan was afraid that this could lead to disturbances and sent officials with troops to suppress it and there were violent clashes.²³

The following year, in the second month of the old calendar, the ten main elders and the imam of the Upper Mosque (*Shangsi*) prevented Ma Qixi and his followers from going to the mosque for Friday prayers. There were violent clashes on the banks of the Western River (*Xihe*) in which the father of Ma Qixi's disciple Ding Quande and Ma Qilin and others were injured and the crops were burnt to the ground. Ding Quande and the others complained about the injuries to the local authority in Lanzhou and the Taozhou sub prefect was sent to deal with the matter and ordered the court to open session in the eighth month of 1905. Before the trial began, the Taozhou sub-prefect browsed through the old files and came to the conclusion that both sides had cause to foment trouble and decided to have the leaders of both sides executed. So when the court went into session, without enquiring too deeply into what had happened, both sides were beaten severely and eight people taken into custody. As a result, Ma Xilin of the Xidaotang died in prison of his injuries and Ma Qixi sent his disciple Ma Zhenglong to lodge another protest with the authorities at Lanzhou. In the twelfth month, Ye Ke was accredited as Sub-Prefect at Taozhou. After completing his own investigations, Ye referred the original charges to Lanzhou and detained both sides in the prison of Quanlan county for over six months. Later through the good offices of ten ward headmen of Lanzhou, the two sides made an oath on the Qur'an and became reconciled. The Lanzhou authorities went along with the tide in the hope that this would bring an end to the conflict.

When Ma Qixi learned that the Taozhou sub-prefect was preparing to seize and execute the leaders of both sides in the dispute he set off for Xinjiang on a mission to 'visit a teacher to seek guidance' (*fangshi wendao*), taking with him his disciples Ma Yingcai, Ma Jianyuan, Ding Zhonghe and others to avoid coming to any harm at the hands of the Taozhou authorities. Their intention was to travel to Samarkand and then go on the *Hajj* to Mecca, but Ma Yingcai died on the way and they returned to Xinjiang. In 1909 they were welcomed back to the

²³ Ma Tong (1983) p 167-8.

old town of Lintan by Ding Quande and his son Ding Yongxiang. Although Ma Qixi had suffered greatly on his three year journey, he had become more determined and on returning to the old town formally renamed his teachings the Xidaotang and declared that he was going to 'plant the seed with honesty and rectitude, block the stream and bloom the flowers, I must succeed' (*jielian zhongzi, guanchuan kaihua, wo yao dechu jieguo*).²⁴

After the revolution of 1911 which toppled the Qing dynasty and brought the Chinese empire to an end, the Xidaotang became deeply involved in social issues, advocating the cutting of the queue as did the revolutionaries and opposing the binding of women's feet. As far as religious doctrine was concerned, they were fundamentalist and emphasised the simplest scriptural and rituals. They relied on the five *tianming* or Wills of God, attaching importance to moral character; speaking in good faith; not accepting *haideye* (special offerings made to the Imam). As far as education was concerned, they advocated that both boys and girls should go to school and study and that boys should not be compelled to read aloud the scriptures. Trade and agriculture were their preferred economic activities and the collective life around the *daotang* as the home was emphasised. Because these principles accorded with what the majority of the poorer Hui wanted in that place and at that time, it was widely welcomed. So the Hui, Salar, Baoan and other ethnic minority peoples in the impoverished border regions sought refuge with the Xidaotang in increasing numbers. The Xidaotang grew into the most united and flourishing of all the sects and Sufi orders in Lintan and its disciples were exceptionally dynamic. Because of this it attracted the envy of other Muslim groups and the close attention of Ma Anliang.²⁵

The Rebellion of Bai Lang

In the early years of the Chinese republic, Muslim communities in northwestern China came into contact with one of the most celebrated bandit-rebels of modern Chinese history, Bai Lang, often known inaccurately as the White Wolf because of the similarity of the pronunciation of his given name to the Chinese word for wolf. Bai Lang was a peasant from Henan who led a rising at the time that the

24 Ma Tong (1983) p 168-169.

25 Ma Tong (1983) p 168-9.

1911 Revolution was bringing about the collapse of the Qing dynasty. Henan was extremely poor and had suffered serious natural disasters which together with high taxation sparked off the rebellion.

The insurrection led by Bai Lang started in Henan, but spread to the borders of Hubei and Anhui provinces. In the third lunar month of 1914, Bai Lang moved out from his base near the Yellow River and headed for Shaanxi, reaching Fengxiang towards the end of the following month and crossing over in to the southern part of Gansu province with a bandit army of as many as twenty to thirty thousand. His policies were characterised as 'take from the rich and give to the poor' and 'Down with Yuan Shikai,' the first president of the new Chinese republic who was on the point of having himself declared emperor. Bai Lang's forces terrorised the local population in Gansu. Ma Anliang sent his subordinate Ma Qi to the old town of Taozhou on April 24 to organise a defence force. Ma Qi is alleged to have told the people of Taozhou that Bai Lang was coming into Gansu to eradicate Islam, in an attempt to get the members of the Sufi orders and other Hui to cooperate with the Han populace in resisting Bai Lang's advance. Hui and Han gentry and merchants moved from the New Town into the Old Town and organised militias, and Min Hanzhang and Min Buyun and others were appointed commanders so there was a combined Han and Hui resistance to the bandit threat. The Hui at least seem to have felt that they were under a dual threat from Bai Lang and from the forces of Ma Anliang. When Bai Lang's band finally arrived in the New Town, Ma Qi who had been ordered to defend it slipped quietly away. The local magistrate fled to Xunhua and the people of the town fled in all directions. Bai Lang's army burned down the New Town and headed for the Old Town where they ran up against a combined Hui and Han militia. One of Bai Lang's commanders was pulled from his horse and beheaded and in fury Bai Lang had the Old Town attacked. On May 1 it was burned to the ground and the militia units led by Min Hanzhang and Min Buyun fled into the hills. Two of the Ahongs who remained in the town told their followers that they could achieve *Shaxide* (Shahid, martyrdom) by committing suicide rather than letting Bai Lang's men kill them. Men, women and children burned themselves to death in their mosques, some killed their families, burned down their own houses and threw themselves into the flames, others killed their families, burned down their houses and fled. The Ahongs who persuaded their followers into *Shaxide* survived and fled. The

intensity of the reaction of the Hui is said to have terrified Bai Lang's bandit band.²⁶

Bai Lang's forces arrived in the Old City on May 1 and laid siege to the headquarters of the Xidaotang on West Phoenix Hill, high on a redoubt above Linxia. Bai Lang's band suffered heavy losses trying to take this stronghold and had misgivings about waiting till night fall when the Qing armies might arrive. On the 2nd of May, the Xidaotang suggested peace negotiations and Bai Lang acquiesced. It was agreed that the Xidaotang would give Bai Lang thirty cavalry horses and in return he would lift the siege, but when the gate was opened to hand over the horses, Bai Lang's men shot the guards. The Xidaotang massed on the sands of the West River for a counter attack. Each side lost at least twenty killed and, fearing a surprise raid at night, the Xidaotang fled to Laziha in Zhuoni. Altogether, at least six thousand Han and Hui citizens of Lintan were killed or injured in the fighting, including thirty eight men and women from the Xidaotang and more than two thousand other Muslims and about a thousand Han. The Xidaotang emerged relatively unscathed from the conflict. When the Xidaotang had left Bai Lang discovered tablets on various shops in the town identifying them with Ma Anliang's Western Army. When he discovered that Ma Qi, one of Ma Anliang's generals was from Lintan, he withdrew in panic and his band made their way back through Shaanxi to Henan.²⁷

On May 3rd followers of the Beizhuang, Multicoloured Mosque and *Gedimu* who had been hiding in hills nearby heard that Bai Lang had gone and returned to their homes to clear up the mess. Those who had no homes to return to went to the Xidaotang headquarters for food and clothing and other necessities. It was some time before the Xidaotang members returned, as their hiding place was further away, and when they did they were enraged to find that their food and other property had been taken. They snatched people at random, tied them up and beat them brutally. Ma Qixi ordered them to be released and sent apologies to their houses. But this further increased the animosity between the members of the Xidaotang and other Muslims.²⁸

On May 13, Ma Anliang sent a unit under the command of Ma Zhongxiao to recapture the fleeing Bai Lang. He passed through the

26 Ma Tong (1983) p 169-172.

27 Ma Tong (1983) p 172-3.

28 Ma Tong (1983) p 173.

Old City of Lintan and was told by Min Hantang and others that the Xidaotang had colluded with Bai Lang's bandits and killed innocent civilians and that charges should be levelled against Ma Qixi. Ma Zhongxiao asked for Ma Qixi to be arraigned before the magistrate at Lanzhou charged with aiding bandits. Ma Anliang was still angry that Ma Qixi had not followed his instructions to attack the Beizhuang *menhuan* and this was an perfect opportunity for revenge.

On the nineteenth of May 1914, early in the morning, troops of Ma Anliang's army commanded by Zhang Shunyuan suddenly surrounded the Xidaotang headquarters. Ma Qixi and seventeen of his family and followers were bound, taken to the banks of the West River and shot. Their bodies were dragged to where Ma Qixi had preached and left in the open for two days. Members of the Beizhuang and Multicoloured Mosque orders were forced to bring dogs to eat the bodies until Ma Qixi's daughter and other older women members of the Xidaotang buried the mutilated bodies on the spot. On the same day that Ma Qixi was executed, Ma Anliang sent another unit of his troops to Taizijie in Hezhong county to kill followers of the Xidaotang who lived there. Zhang Shunyuan who had been responsible for Ma Qixi's death captured eighty Xidaotang followers and held them in his encampment. He drove away the women, seized property worth 1,300,000 liang of silver and sealed the door of the Xidaotang. The eighty captives were sent to prison but later released.²⁹

On June 22nd by the old calendar, Zhang Shunyuan took all the Xidaotang women and children of Hezhou and held them in a carters and drovers inn in the Bafang district. Contemporary accounts allege that Ma Anliang planned to distribute all the women and girls to Hezhou people as concubines and servants but that he was dissuaded from doing this and took his revenge on Ma Qixi personally by handing his daughter in law over as a concubine but let all the others go free.³⁰

By 1928, the Hui population of Lintan was of the order of ten thousand households, that is over 60,000 individuals. Of these, some 500 households or 3000 individuals belonged to the Xidaotang, the remainder being devotees of the Beizhuang the Multicoloured Mosque or the *Gedimu* sects. The deep sectarian divisions among Lintan Muslims were primarily between the Xidaotang on one side

29 Ma Tong (1983) p 173-5.

30 Ma Tong (1983) p 175-6.

which was accused of heresy and labelled the 'New Teaching' (*xinjiao*) and the others (*Gedimu*, Multicoloured Mosque and *Beizhuang*) which were collectively known as the 'Old Teaching' (*laojiao*).³¹ The followers of the Old Teaching were more numerous but disunited and not well educated. On the other hand, the Xidaotang, while fewer in number, were a tightly knit group which stressed the importance of education. The bitter conflict between the two groups can be traced back to a dispute between two *xiuca*i, (first degree holders under the imperial examination system) Ma Qixi of the Xidaotang and the local gentry member Min Hanzhang. Ma Anliang took advantage of this dispute, sided with Min and by doing so established his own control over the Lintan area. The situation in the region was also complicated by the conflict between Tibetans, Hui and Han.³²

Development of the Xidaotang under Ma Mingren

Ma Qixi's successor was Ma Mingren who took over as leading Imam (*jiaozhu*) of the Xidaotang at the age of twenty-two. He was born in 1896 and died in 1946 aged fifty three. He was from peasant stock and his family home was Taozhou. Ma Mingren had some education and had been in contact with Ahongs of the Jahriyya (Zheherenye) order before moving to the Xidaotang. Under his leadership the Xidaotang concentrated on education and trading activities and evolved into a highly integrated organisation whose members became known as the millionaires of Lintan, and this commercial side of the life of the Xidaotang was extremely important in its survival and development. The structure that was set up was hierarchical with the leading Imam superior to the Ahong and overseeing both religious and economic activities. Unlike the Sufi *menhuan*, the Xidaotang appointed managers and accountants below the Imam. The economic activities of the Xidaotang appeared to be operating in the interest of all the followers of the sect, but they were controlled by the three main Lintan Hui clans of Min, Ma and Ding. After Ma Mingren's death in 1946, there were frequent disputes over the resources of the order between the clans, but they never allowed the conflict to split the Xidaotang.³³

31 The term *laojiao* or Old Teaching (Old Sect) has given rise to much confusion. Because of the similarity in meaning to *Gedimu* (from the Arabic *al qadim*, the old or ancient), it has sometimes been used to refer to that tradition.

32 Ma Tong (1983) p 179.

33 Ma Tong (1983) p 190-191.

The Director (*jingli*) of the Xidaotang before 1949 was Min Zizhang, the son of the deputy *Shaykh* and Leading Imam who was in charge for over twenty years. On the eve of Liberation, the Xidaotang moved all its major assets, both financial and property from Lintan to Laleguan in Luqu in the predominantly Tibetan region of southern Gansu (Gan'nan) which is on the Tao River upstream from Lintan. The Leading Imam Min Zhidao and his principal officials also went to live there and many of their followers moved out to farms and plantations. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Xidaotang sent Li Huairan, the younger brother of the wife of the former Imam Ma Mingren, back to Lintan to liaise with the new People's Government and he eventually became the Director of the sect. However he never managed to secure complete control over the finances of the Xidaotang as the main funds remained in the hands of the former Director Min Wenhuan who remained in Laleguan and retained control over most of the finances there on the pretext that the Imam, Min Zhidao, had been taken ill. Min Zhidao was actually in robust health, but he and Li Huairan were powerless. The Ding clan went its own way with farming and commercial enterprises and the central direction of the Xidaotang economy gradually disintegrated so that after 1949, Xidaotang finances had become split up and most of its followers were poor with a low standard of living and were deeply divided although on the surface they attempted to maintain a semblance of unity and harmony.³⁴

Following the example given by Ma Qixi, the leadership of the Xidaotang in the 1940s took great care to develop links with local and national political figures, including the Hui general Bai Chongxi, the powerful Three Mas of the northwest and via various Guomindang officials with Chiang Kai-shek. Hui students associated with the sect were also selected to go to Lanzhou and other colleges to study, many of them being sent to study military-related subjects. During the struggle for power in Gansu in 1949, some Xidaotang members fought in independent units against the People's Liberation Army but these units were eradicated. The resistance of Xidaotang members to Land Reform and to collectivisation was significant but by the early nineteen sixties all of its supporters, both the inner core and the outer membership, had been incorporated into People's Communes.³⁵

34 Ma Tong (1983) p 192.

35 Ma Tong (1983) p 192-194.

As with the Sufi *menhuan*, the Xidaotang Imams held their posts for life, but the post was not hereditary. Nevertheless the leadership was restricted and before 1949, the Imams all came from three families sharing two surnames. The organisation of the Xidaotang laid great emphasis on the construction of agricultural and commercial enterprises so that on one level it did not appear to be a religious organisation. The religious activities of the Xidaotang did not differ significantly from the other Islamic sects at the time. Apart from an annual Prophet's Day service which was organised on a grand scale, the main distinctive service of the Xidaotang was the commemoration of the days on which the founder Ma Qixi and his successor Ma Mingren were martyred. The death of Ding Quande was also commemorated but the anniversary of the martyrdom of Ma Qixi was the most solemn. Before the service the followers of the sect made offerings of cows, sheep and money and during the service they prayed and read from the Qur'an and other holy books. Large collections for charity were taken at each commemorative ceremony and donations were made to outsiders as well as Xidaotang members. Ma Tong considers that in terms of their religious ideas and activities they were very close to the Jahriyya/Zheherenye *menhuan*. While Ma Mingren was Imam, there were plans to build fifty new mosques in places where the Xidaotang had supporters, but these plans were scaled down after his death and only seven had been completed by 1949. Most of the timber used in their construction came from the Xidaotang's own plantations. Without the economic organisation that the sect had developed this work would have been difficult to accomplish.³⁶

The economy of the Xidaotang benefited from its proximity to the backward economy of the Tibetan areas which its members were able to exploit. The people who followed Ma Qixi's teachings at first were a few family members or close friends, all from extremely poor backgrounds and the sect was pushed aside by the other *menhuan* in the region. Financially, it relied on donations, alms and the income from a few small shops. Between 1913 and 1916 the sect was involved in costly litigation and the commercial activities came to a virtual standstill. Ma Mingren and Min Zhidao transformed its finances and from 1918 onwards it was operating in both the commercial and agricultural areas. More than two hundred families of followers who had been scattered and lost to the sect were

36 Ma Tong (1983) p 194-196.

recruited back into the fold, found a place in the residential core of the Xidaotang and allocated work. The Xidaotang operated on the principles of cooperation and a collective lifestyle, and property was held in common. It became a kind of totalitarian organisation to which members were expected to dedicate their lives and contribute all their worldly goods. In return, work, the daily necessities of life, education, weddings and funerals and financial support for families would all be provided by the Xidaotang. Anything belonging to its members was converted into communal property to be used for the good of the community. Almost a thousand followers of the Xidaotang lived and worked in the Hall itself under this regime. This is uncannily like the communal mess-halls that were attempted in the People's Communes during the Great Leap Forward of 1958. The activities of the Xidaotang expanded. Still firmly based on commerce and agriculture, in that order, they took in livestock pasturing and forestry and made a great deal of money. Under the guidance of Ma Mingren, they had emerged as a considerable economic, social and political power in the region. The Xidaotang began as a heretical sect but gradually became recognised as orthodox.³⁷

Between 1941 and 1945, the Xidaotang grew extremely wealthy. Much of their money is said to have come from trade in arms and opium. Their business arm was organised into twenty teams, each team made up of a dozen or so traders, all equipped with a rifle and a horse. These trading teams penetrated Tibet, Qinghai and Sichuan, taking firearms into the Tibetan areas and bringing opium out to sell to private traders in the interior. The Xidaotang operated on a large scale. It was Ma Mingren's wish that they should build fifty mosques and dozens of farms. After his death and without his inspiration, the economic activities of the Xidaotang no longer had the same impetus. Individual members of the sect also began to amass their own private fortunes instead of allowing all finances to go to the collective treasury. This also spread suspicion and anxiety within the sect. Some carpenters, leather workers and brick and tile makers started working privately. They made a good living, but farmers, herdsman, foresters and carriers grew poorer.

Although agriculture was a lower priority than commerce for the Xidaotang, by 1949, they had established thirteen farms and four others were under construction. These farms employed many members of the sect. Of the land owned by the Xidaotang,

³⁷ Ma Tong (1983) p 196–198.

approximately one third was the ancestral property of members of the sect. The remaining two thirds was bought under the supervision of Ma Mingren in the years between 1928 and 1945. Some of this was land acquired in 1918 from the families of Xidaotang members who had been killed in the turmoil, some was land handed over to a member of the Xidaotang when they inherited it from a family member who had been killed. Some land was also acquired by the sect when the widows of men killed in the intercommunal violence married into the Xidaotang and brought land with them. Although the land was communal in name, after the death of Ma Mingren, the Xidaotang elite appear to have treated it more and more as their own personal property.³⁸

Xidaotang businesses based in the Old City of Lintan on the borders of Tibet area were far from the national commercial networks. They ran trading businesses based in the town and travelling commercial networks. They dealt in cloth, general goods, animal products and grain and also organised large scale private arms deals based on the firearms-opium exchange described above. Their businesses also included pack animals, inns and shops. The Xidaotang also ran several plantations and a factory in Lanzhou processing timber. Pasturing was not as developed as their other activities because of their lack of hill pasture land, but they had pasture sites in Xiahe, Luqu and Zhuoni, all in or near the areas with Tibetan populations.³⁹

Some four hundred families, more than a thousand people in all lived a communal life within the inner Xidaotang, in theory all at an equal level although in practice this was not necessarily the case. There were separate canteens, for men and women to eat in and there was a small canteen for the sick, the old and the very young. However after the death of Ma Mingren in 1946, as private finances grew, the communal canteen became less and less used, individual families began to cater for themselves once again and the disparity between the standard of living of the members widened. The Imam, the businessmen and some of the more powerful members of the organisation ate well, with meat and vegetables provided for them, but the ordinary members of the Xidaotang had meagre fare with cheaper food grains rather than wheat or rice and potatoes.⁴⁰

38 Ma Tong (1983) p 198–201.

39 Ma Tong (1983) p 201–4.

40 Ma Tong (1983) p 204.

During Ma Mingren's tenure as Imam, a number of schools were created. He was in favour of education for all children, both boys and girls. The boys went to the Qixi Primary School and the girls to the Qixi Girls' Primary School, while those who wanted to study the scriptures and follow a religious education went to school at the Western Mosque. The name of the primary schools changed several times in the years before 1949 as they were incorporated into new educational structures established by the Guomindang. The fees were all paid by the Xidaotang. Work was started on the construction of a Middle School in 1947 but it had not been completed by 1949. The emphasis that the sect placed on education meant that its leaders were better educated than those of many other groups. Many of the senior figures also spoke Tibetan.⁴¹

Ma Mingren's death in 1946 was the end of an era for the Xidaotang. Min Zhidao (1882–1957), his deputy who came from a comfortably-off peasant family in the Zhuoluo district of Lintan, took over as Imam. He had been one of Ma Qixi's earliest and most pious disciples and was the only obvious successor to Ma Mingren. However, he did not have Ma Mingren's organisational ability and when he took over he was old and frail and frequently ill. The drift away from the cooperative ethos of the early Xidaotang accelerated, the divisions between the members of the sect, particularly the wealthier ones increased. Although this distressed Min Zhidao, he was in no position to halt it and the Xidaotang gradually fell into a decline.⁴²

41 Ma Tong (1983) p 205–207.

42 Ma Tong (1983) p 207.

Language and the Hui

There is much confusion among non-Muslims in China about the language spoken by the Hui and especially about the role of Arabic, both written and spoken, in their lives. An extraordinary example of this lack of understanding is a guidebook for tourists to Lanzhou, written by a Chinese author and published in English in the *Discover China's Cities* series in 1989. It explains that the Hui 'speak the Han language or [M]andarin outside their own communities, but speak Arabic among themselves.'¹ This delightful but fanciful conceit reveals the exoticism of the Hui vernacular to outsiders and does contain a grain of truth. Arabic is indeed extremely important to the Hui in China today. On the long rail journey from Lanzhou to Urumqi, a tough Hui businesswoman told me with some emphasis, 'Arabic is one of the languages of the Hui.'² Certainly, the Arabic script is prominent in Hui communities. For example, the Stars and Moon Restaurant at 113 Beiyuan Gate, Xi'an, which specialises in *yangrou paomo* 羊肉泡沫, a lamb hot pot poured over broken nan bread considered to be the finest Hui food in the city, has the phrase *mata'am al Muslimin*, Muslim Restaurant, in Arabic in green print on its business and menu card. The phrase appears in the same form on the signs of halal restaurants and food stalls throughout China making them instantly recognisable.³ Arabic is of course used for liturgical purposes in the mosques and Sufi centres, and for calligraphic decoration in mosques, important in the light of the prohibition on images in Islam. It is studied as a foreign language for religious purposes in the Islamic Academies and for more practical

1 An Jiyue et al (ed) *Lanzhou*, New World Press, Beijing, 1989.

2 Interview March 20, 1991, Lanzhou to Urumqi train.

3 Observation Monday October 17, 1988.

reasons such as commerce and diplomacy in private language schools and the Tongxin Arabic School.⁴

Among academics in China who have studied the Hui, there is a consensus that, because of the long history of contact and cohabitation with the Han Chinese, Hui people have completely mastered the Han spoken language and script, and that the language they normally use, apart from using the Chinese dialect of the area they live also preserves a 'special social dialect' which uses some Arabic and Persian words.⁵ Ma Yin represents this consensus: 'During the initial stage of their eastward exodus, the Huihais used the Arab, Persian and Han languages. However in the course of their long years living with the Hans, and especially due to the increasing number of Hans joining their ranks, they gradually spoke the Han language only, while maintaining certain Arab and Persian phrases.'⁶ The extent to which it is possible to speak of a separate Hui language or *Huihuihua* 回回话 in any period of Hui history is not entirely clear. Arabic words are used in connection with religious observance and, since the Qur'an is read and studied in Arabic, this is not surprising. More interesting is the persistence of Persian vocabulary which has social and historical as well as religious connotations. Huang Tinghui, an ethnic Hui and a historian of the Hui community, has suggested that when Huis are talking to each other, as much as 20–30% of their vocabulary would be of foreign origin and much of their conversation would be unintelligible to non-Hui.⁷ Other scholars with experience of Hui communities feel that this is greatly exaggerated and point to the lack of statistical evidence to support this.⁸ However the existence of a special Hui vocabulary is certainly widespread. In the Hui community in Hunan, for example, the most common greeting is *seliamu* for *salaam a'aleikum* (and incidentally the *se* and *mu* are written with the characters used to write *semu* or blue-eyed foreigners in the Yuan dynasty); the expounding of doctrine by an Ahong (from Akhund which is of Persian origin) is called *waersi*; Muslim coreligionists are addressed as *dositi* (there is a problem with the antecedents here as *dost* is used in Persian, Turkish, Uyghur and Urdu but its use by the Hui is probably of Persian origin); spirits are

4 Visit to Tongxin, September 19, 1992.

5 *Dangdai Zhongguo de Ningxia* p 3.

6 Ma Yin p 98.

7 Information from Huang Tinghui, Nationalities Institute, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, March 29 1991.

8 Information from Wang Jianping, Durham 6 April 1994.

referred to as *yibulisi* (Turkish *iblis* meaning satan or devil and non-Muslims are known as *kafeile* (Turkish *kafir* infidel).⁹ What are described as Arabic courtesies or greetings used in Yangzhou include *achusaluemo* (salaam a'aleikum) for hello, *yingshangerlahu* (insha'allah) for goodbye, *saierbuni* for thank you, *koudao* for please eat and *huoshi* for that was quite sufficient, thank you.¹⁰

Chinese has at times been written phonetically in the Arabic script rather than in characters by some Hui people. This was called the Small Classic *xiaojing* 小经 script, but also known colloquially as the Little Brocade *xiaor jin* 小儿锦. This was derived from primary level *madrasa* textbooks where this method was used as a way of introducing the Arabic script, prior to the study of the Arabic language itself. Although it has been replaced by Chinese for everyday use and Arabic for liturgical purposes, there are still people in Ningxia and probably in other Hui areas as well who can use the script.¹¹

The relaxation of restrictions on religious activity in the nineteen-eighties led to a revival of interest in Arabic:

'Muslims in Tianmu village [in Tianjin] have used Chinese for a long time but they still speak old Arabic in the mosque. Since the implementation of reform and open policy of 1978, the residents of Tianmu have met Muslims from Arab countries and found a great difference between modern and old Arabic. Gao Yaokuan suggested that the villagers learn modern Arabic and his idea received support. In November 1986, some teachers of Tianjin Foreign Languages Institute were invited to teach an Arabic class in the village. After three years of effort, many people can now read the Koran and more than ten people can converse in Arabic. Four young people are now studying Arabic at the Oriental Languages and Literature Department of Beijing University.'¹²

In Ningxia, Tongxin, one of the major centres of Islam, has an Arabic language school. For more details see Chapter 11.¹³

9 Ma Liangsheng (ed) *Hunan huizu* Changsha, 1988 p 16-17.

10 Zhu Jiang 'Yisilanjiao wenhua dong jian Yangzhou shimo' in Gansu sheng minzu yanjiusuo (ed) *Yisilanjiao zai Zhongguo* Yinchuan, 1988, p 40; Gladney (1991) p 393-421 has a useful basic vocabulary of Hui terms, identifying their Arabic, Persian and Turkish origins.

11 Song Guozhu (ed) *Ningxia fengwu zhi* Yinchuan 1988, p 123.

12 Lu Yun 'Tianmu - a Muslim Village' *Beijing Review* 33/28 July 9-15 1990 p 21-24.

13 Ningxia huabao (ed) *Zhongguo Ningxia*, Yinchuan, 1983/4.

The Persian Language in Yuan Dynasty China

The reasons for the persistence of a non-Chinese vocabulary in the language of the Hui people can be traced back to their origins in China during the Mongol empire. China under the Mongol Yuan dynasty was a multicultural and multilingual society. In terms of numbers of speakers and authority, the two most important languages were Chinese in all its regional varieties and the Mongol of the conquerors, but other languages were important for trade, commerce and local usage. Turkic languages and Arabic were spoken by foreigners resident in China, but by far the most important non-Chinese language was Persian, spoken by many of the conscripted artisans and soldiers from Central Asia, merchants and all the educated nobility and imams.¹⁴ According to some traditions, this was the language that Marco Polo used when he was employed by the Mongol court, if, of course, he ever was. In the documentary evidence that has come down from the Yuan period, there is some confusion about the language of the Muslims which is sometimes referred to as *Huihuihua* 回回话. Like many names used in connection with the Muslims to the west of China, including the name Hui or Huihui itself, there is evidence that its meaning has drifted over time. Some writers used the term *Huihuihua* to mean both Arabic and Persian, reflecting the similarity of the script to outsiders who did not appreciate that the spoken languages and their vocabulary and grammar were quite dissimilar. Other writers clearly employed the term to refer to Arabic, used of course by all Muslims for religious purposes, but in the majority of cases it refers to Persian, the common written language of the educated and administrative classes in the eastern part of the Islamic world from the tenth century onwards and the dominant language of the region conquered by the Mongols.¹⁵

Persian remained in use throughout the Mongol domination of China and into the Ming dynasty which followed it. The Ming government established a *Siyiguan* 四夷馆, the Aliens Academy in 1407, which had eight sections specialising in translation between Mongolian, Jurchen, Tibetan, Hindi, Persian, Thai, Uyghur and

14 Huang Shijian 'The Persian Language in China during the Yuan Dynasty' *Papers in Far Eastern History* 34 September 1986. Berthold Laufer *Sino-Iranica: Chinese Contributions to the History of Civilisation in Ancient Iran* 1919 has much material on cultural exchange in both directions and loan words in each language from the other, attesting to the close connection between the two cultures over the centuries.

15 Huang Shijian (1986).

Burmese and Chinese. The Academy also studied the customs and culture of the nations that China was likely to have contact with and advised on the correct protocol for the reception of tribute missions from each country.¹⁶

Persian Manuscripts

In his seminal work on Islam in China, Dabry de Thiersant, French Consul and Chargé d'Affaires noted the emergence of the term *Huihuishu* 回回书 to refer to the script or in general the language of the former Huihui or the inhabitants of the kingdom of Huihui. This has been equated with the Persian of Bukhara on the basis of research carried out on a volume of messages in Persian which was part of a series of sixteen volumes published on the orders of the Kangxi emperor, based in turn on the memorials of a number of young scholars sent by him to study the languages, mores and polity of various regions.

Evidence for the persistent influence of Persian in the northwest of China was uncovered by the d'Ollone mission of 1911 which retrieved eleven Persian manuscripts from Gansu and donated them to the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.

'The presence of these manuscripts in China and their annotation which proves that they have been read shows that the Chinese Muslims did not restrict themselves to elementary books of jurisprudence, but that they were familiar with the most abstruse books ever written in a Muslim language, the *Lavaieh* of Djami or the *Mershad el-ibad*. These works were Sufi to the highest degree which concurs well with your discovery of brotherhoods in China. As documentation to support this discovery, it is necessary to cite notably the biographies of the Naqshbandis and the *Lavaieh* of Djami who was the disciple of Khadjeh Ehrar to whom he dedicated a celebrated poem the *Tohfet el Ehrar*. As for the *Maktal*, a succession of moving narratives of Ali, Hussein and Hassan, it is absolutely Shi'ite (letter of M. Blochet accompanying the despatch of the notes which follow).'

The first three documents analyzed were: a fragment of a history of the prophets in Persian with many extracts from the Qur'an, in

16 Huang Shijian (1986); *Cihai* p 1737; de Thiersant (1878) p 7-9.

competent Naskhi handwriting (the manuscript style, equivalent perhaps to copperplate, on which modern printed Arabic is based), without a date but probably copied in Gansu at the beginning of the nineteenth century and bound with pages from a Tibetan book; a commentary in Persian on the *Lavaieh* of Nour ed-Din Abd er-Rahman el Djami (year 898 of the Hajira), a collection of Sufi sentences paraphrased in Persian quatrains ('They make a good manual of modern Sufism and have been translated into English by Whitfield in 1904. The author of the *Lavaieh* was one of the most celebrated scholars of Persian Sufism and wrote a great number of poems which some erudites in Persian consider to be of the second rank') in good Naskhi handwriting copied in Gansu, probably in the early part of the nineteenth century; a Persian treatise on prayer again in a good Naskhi hand copied by one Ahmed ibn Ahmed with no date, perhaps in the seventeenth century.¹⁷

Arabic as the language of the Qur'an was preserved and that is not surprising, but the evidence suggests that Hui scholars and religious leaders right through to the nineteenth century made a conscious effort to retain at least part of their distinctive linguistic heritage by studying and copying Persian documents. Ahongs and the heads of Sufi orders were often chosen because of their knowledge of Arabic. Many achieved a high standard in spoken and written Arabic and some also knew Persian.¹⁸

Hui and Uyghur

Another source of confusion is the relationship between the language spoken by the Hui and by their neighbours and fellow Muslims, the Uyghurs, who mainly live in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. The Uyghurs also use Arabic for liturgical purposes, and their own language is itself written in a modified form of the Arabic script, although for a period between 1958 and 1978 it was written in a specially adapted Latin script. Unlike the language spoken by the Hui, Uyghur has no connection with Chinese and is in fact a Turkic language, most closely related to Uzbek.

The Uyghur language, the most important among Xinjiang's Muslims, belongs to the eastern or Altaic branch of the Turkic family

17 D'Ollone (1911) p 286-7.

18 D'Ollone 205-9.

and is related to Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, Turkish and, most closely, to Uzbek, giving Uyghurs a means of communication with their counterparts in Central Asia, but not with the Chinese, unless they learn the language formally. Uyghur vocabulary also contains a high proportion of Persian loan words, including such basic words as the names of the days of the week.¹⁹ Fluency in Standard Chinese (Mandarin, *putonghua*) is essential for officials or teachers, but the standard of spoken Chinese among Uyghur and Kazakh academics is surprisingly poor.²⁰ Traders and small shopkeepers in the bazaars know little Chinese and few Han Chinese can communicate effectively in Uyghur, although the language is taught in schools and at Xinjiang University, resulting in a serious language barrier between the communities.²¹

Uyghur was written in the Arabic script after the adoption of Islam in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but unlike Turkish did not convert to the Latin script in 1928. As part of China's language reform programme, a New Script based on a modified Latin alphabet was created in June 1958, replacing an experimental Cyrillic script, which reflected the influence of Russian in the region. The New Script was seen as a Han imposition, and the Old Script, that is the script based on Arabic, reappeared in 1978 and was authorised in 1980 for both the Uyghur and Kazakh languages. The current version is a modified Persi-Arabic script with diacritical marks for the complex vowel system. All books and newspapers now appear in the Old Script.²²

For the Hui community in Urumqi, the capital of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, the linguistic environment is quite complicated.

19 Uyghur staff in hotels in Kashghar speak the Chinese they have learned at school and refer to it as *Hanzu hua*, the language of the Han people, treating it ironically as a minority language. Personal observation, September 1992.

20 Personal observation after discussions with members of the Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences, Urumqi March 1991, September 1992.

21 Visiting Turfan with a Han colleague who spoke fluent Uyghur, I was struck by the negative reaction produced by the appearance of a group of Hans and the transformation when at least part of the conversation could be carried out in Uyghur. Personal observation, villages outside Turfan, March 1991.

22 Colin Mackerras 'Uygur Performing Arts in Contemporary China' *China Quarterly* 101, March 1985, p 58-77; Donald Macmillen 'Xinjiang and Wang Enmao: New Directions in power, policy and integration' *China Quarterly* 99 p 569-593, September 1984; S. Robert Ramsey *The Languages of China* Princeton University Press, 1987 p 182-194; Ildikó Bellér-Hann 'script changes in Xinjiang' in Shirin Akiner (ed) *Cultural Change and Continuity in Central Asia*, Kegan Paul International, 1991; Reinhard F. Hahn *Spoken Uyghur*, University of Washington Press, 1991; Personal observation in bookshops, Urumqi, Turpan and Kashgar 1991/2.

Urumqi is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual city, but Chinese and Uyghur are the two main languages of inter-ethnic communication. Street and shop signs, official documents, newspapers and official permits all appear in both languages. The Hui community in Urumqi define themselves by their place of origin as well as their religion and Hui identity. The Shaanxi Hui community is the largest but there is also a Qinghai community. The different communities have their own mosques and do not normally worship in each others. The dominant community is the Shaanxi Hui community and therefore the Shaanxi dialect of Chinese is the main form of Chinese spoken between Hui people in Urumqi. This automatically distinguishes them from the Han population of Urumqi whose spoken Chinese is of the Gansu variety. The Urumqi Hui vernacular has the vocabulary from Arabic and Persian that is standard in most Hui colloquial language in China, but there are also loan words from Uyghur because of the mixed linguistic milieu.²³

The Language of China's Little Mecca

The region around the city of Linxia in western Gansu has its own distinctive vernacular, known as *Hezhou hua* 河州话, the Hezhou language after Linxia's name when it was the centre of the Hui insurrections of the 1860s. It is a lingua franca used for centuries in this region of multi-lingual communities. While the Chinese element appears to be dominant, Mongolian, Tibetan and Turkic influences also survive and Muslims use the Arabic and Persian vocabulary common elsewhere in Hui speech. The syntax is not the same as in standard Putonghua, with the normal subject-verb-object order being reversed. *Hezhou hua* is reputed to be spoken slightly differently by the different ethnic groups in the town. All apparently use different intonations so that it is immediately obvious whether one is talking to a Han or a Hui in Linxia town or to a Dongxiang or a Bao'an.²⁴

However much the Hui retain their attachment to Arabic and Persian, whether for reasons of sentiment, identity, pride or practicality, their long term presence in China has meant that Chinese is the single most important language for them. It is the route to education, especially higher education, promotion at work, the means of communication with Han and other neighbours and the medium of trade

23 Liu Lili (1989) p 1-10 and passim.

24 Gao Zhanfu (1991) p 389-391.

nationally. Their use of Chinese as a mother tongue distinguishes them from all the other Muslim communities of China especially the Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and Tajiks of Xinjiang.

Hui Communities in Contemporary China

Muslim communities suffered, in common with other ethnic and religious minorities such as the Tibetans and Mongols, from the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) desire to impose ethnic uniformity and use only the term, *Zhongguo ren* 中国人 ('Chinese' in the sense of citizen of the PRC) instead of the plethora of existing ethnic minority group names. In many ways this was a continuation of practices followed under the empire and the Republic. The hostility of the CCP to religion also meant that not only were religious groups hindered and suppressed, but that no reliable figures are available for the number of Muslims or other believers in China. However, policy towards ethnic minorities has varied substantially in different periods of the People's Republic, and at times ethnic minorities have benefited from a degree of positive discrimination. In the early nineteen fifties, some *waqfiyya* land owned by mosques and Sufi orders was confiscated during the Land Reform programme, but the authorities were relatively tolerant of religious belief and did not seek to suppress Islam in general although they did move against radical *menhuan*, which were treated in a similar way to Daoist and Buddhist secret societies and were outlawed if they appeared to pose a threat to the security of the new state.

The collectivisation of agriculture in the mid-1950s, the anti-Rightist campaign to control the expression of opinions of dissenting intellectuals in 1957 and the Great Leap Forward in 1958, during which People's Communes were introduced marked a turn towards a more radical policy associated with CCP Chairman Mao Zedong's wish to speed China's transformation into his vision of a socialist society. The component of this transformation that most directly affected religious organisations was the Religious System Reform

(*zongjiao zhidu gaige* 宗教制度改革) implemented in 1958. Muslim communities, including the Hui, lost more of their land and buildings and many mosques were closed down and religious activities restricted. Hui businesses, including *halal* restaurants were also brought under state of collective ownership under parallel legislation to 'socialise' industry and commerce.¹ However it was during the Cultural Revolution that Chinese Islam was dealt its most serious blow since the foundation of the People's Republic. The Cultural Revolution was a bitter struggle for supremacy within the Chinese Communist Party between the radical faction of Mao and the more pragmatic group led by Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. Mass organisations of students and workers, loosely known as Red Guards although they had many different names, took the struggle out onto the streets and violence and disruption spread throughout China. The Cultural Revolution began in 1966, and according to some accounts lasted until Mao's death in 1976. The ultra-leftist leadership around Mao maintained that there was no longer any necessity for different policies for ethnic minorities as the nationality problem had been solved. As a result, policies specific to minority cultures were dropped and they were supposed to adopt the majority Han culture. The concept of regional autonomy was considered to be outdated, minority schools and colleges were closed down, the use of minority language scripts was restricted or even banned and many cadres of minority nationality were replaced by Hans.²

In Muslim areas, most mosques were forced to close down and many were badly damaged or even completely destroyed in the Red Guard crusade to destroy all remnants of what they regarded as archaic and obsolete feudal culture. In the jargon of the Cultural Revolution, they were attacking the 'Four Olds' (*sijiu* 四旧) – old thinking, old culture, old morality and old customs. It is not clear to what extent the Cultural Revolution took the form of an inter-ethnic conflict in the regions of China where there were substantial ethnic minority populations. There is some suggestion that Red Guards from a Hui background wanted to be seen to be in the forefront of the attacks on mosques to show that they were even more ardent in their support for Mao Zedong than their Han colleagues³. Research work on Islam, as on most other fields of study was paralysed during the

1 Gladney (1991) p 122 and *passim*.

2 Heberer (1989) p 25–29.

3 Personal communications.

Cultural Revolution. It was only in the nineteen seventies that some articles relating to Islam began, initially to appear in studies of archaeology and international relations.⁴

The Shadian Incident

One of the most serious incidents involving Hui Muslims during the Cultural Revolution occurred in the Yunnan village of Shadian near the border with Burma. In 1967, Shadian, like much of China was divided between rival Cultural Revolution groups. The Red Guards insisted on the mosques being closed and burned copies of the Qur'an and other religious texts, but others attempted to preserve the constitutional rights of ethnic minorities. The Red Guards claimed the support of the central Cultural Revolution group and were supplied with arms by the Peoples Liberation Army. In July 1968, they surrounded Shadian and fired on the mosque and houses. Several people were killed but the Red Guards were kept out of the village. Shadian became a haven for the more conservative elements in the region. In November 1968, the Revolutionary Committee of Yunnan ordered a propaganda team into Shadian. The team chose to billet themselves in the main mosque of the village, ate pork while they were there and threw the bones into the well which the faithful used to draw water to wash before prayer. They humiliated and ill-treated the Hui to prove how revolutionary they were and their activities provoked a violent response from the Muslims of Shadian.

In October 1973, Ma Bohua, a secondary school teacher led a movement to retake the mosque and open it for prayer. Ma Shaomei, secretary of the local Communist Youth League and a Muslim was arrested in May 1974 and his fellow Muslims surrounded the office of the propaganda team and demanded that he be set free. Negotiations and appeals to the provincial government on freedom of religion appeared to be getting nowhere and in December 1974, the Hui community in Shadian established a Hui militia with Ma Bohua as commander and Ma Shaomei as political commissar. In May 1975, People's Liberation Army units which had been stationed outside Shadian attempted to enter the village but were barred by the villagers. On the 23rd, leaflets produced by the Provincial Party Committee were dropped by helicopter on Shadian, denouncing

4 Gao Zhanfu (1991) p 207.

counter-revolutionaries and reactionary Imams. The Hui responded by burning the leaflets in front of the building where the propaganda team was staying. Negotiations for the Hui to surrender their weapons failed and the Chinese authorities accused them of wanting to cooperate with the Soviet Union, and to found an independent Islamic republic. These accusations were later blamed on the Gang of Four, the group of senior Communist Party figures associated with Chairman Mao Zedong and led by his wife Jiang Qing, who were later to be imprisoned after a trial that ended in January 1981.

The Peoples Liberation Army troops moved in on Shadian at 3 a.m. on July 29, 1975, with artillery, flame-throwers and incendiary bombs. At least 900 Hui were killed and 600 injured in Shadian during fighting that lasted eight days, and hundreds more were killed in military action in the surrounding villages. Between 400 and 700 PLA soldiers probably died. Shadian was effectively razed to the ground and after the massacre the remaining population had to be relocated in an echo of the policies of the Qing government in dealing with uprisings. After the death of Mao in September 1976 and the arrest of the Gang of Four, there was a 'reversal of verdicts' on the Shadian massacre. It was decided that those who had been resisting the troops were no longer to be regarded as counter-revolutionaries, given the special circumstances of the time and that their organisation, *Hizb Allah* (Arabic 'Party of God') was not to be considered an illegal secret society as it had been previously but a legitimate religious organisation.⁵

Chinese Islam after Mao

For Muslims throughout China, the situation changed radically after the end of the Cultural Revolution and the death of Chairman Mao Zedong in 1976, and in the decade since 1979 there has been a remarkable resurgence of Muslim communities and Islamic religious activity. This is attributed by the government press to the influence of *gaige kaifang* 改革开放, the reform and opening up policies of Deng Xiaoping. With the rebuilding of mosques that had been demolished during the Cultural Revolution, the publication of books, journals and newspapers specifically for Muslims in China and the realisation

5 Ma Shaomei (1989). I am very grateful to Wang Jianping, the translator, for permission to cite this material. Additional information was also provided by an academic researcher from Kunming, whom I have agreed not to identify.

that China had to be able to convince the Muslim world, with which it wished to trade and establish political alliances, that Islam could be practised freely in China, China's Muslims have been allowed something of a renaissance. Since 1979, the five provinces and regions of northwest China which have significant Muslim populations, Xinjiang, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia and Shaanxi, have organised a series of colloquia on Islamic issues and others have been held in Beijing and in the southeastern coastal areas. Studies of Islamic culture in China and in the rest of the Islamic world have experienced a revival and hundreds of books have been published in the field.⁶

According to statistics published in official news and academic publications, since 1979, 'more than 20,000 mosques have opened to Muslims,' or more accurately reopened, as most were closed down if not pulled down during the Cultural Revolution.⁷ 800,000 copies of the Qur'an and nine other Islamic Classics have been printed and distributed, and *Chinese Muslim* (*Zhongguo Musilin* 中国穆斯林), the magazine of the government-controlled Islamic Association of China formed in 1953 has been published in the Chinese and Uyghur languages. It is estimated that 2,000 Muslims visit Mecca annually from China on the state-supervised *hajj* pilgrimage.⁸ The official New China News Agency reported the departure in 1988 of a group of forty four 'Chinese Muslims from Xinjiang' who left on pilgrimage on June 10, and five hundred more who were due to leave for Mecca via Pakistan 'in the next few days.' According to statistics released by religious authorities in Xinjiang, 6500 people of different Muslim ethnic groups made the pilgrimage to Mecca from 1980 to 1987.⁹

With the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991 and the re-emergence, on the borders of China, of independent Central Asian republics which have Islamic histories and traditions,¹⁰ the role of China's Muslims, many of whom share common ethnic and linguistic ties as well as Islam with their neighbours, is likely to

6 Gao Zhanfu (1991) p 207-208; 224-231.

7 Uyghur and Hui people from northwest China who travelled into China Proper after the Cultural Revolution were incensed to find that mosques had been demolished in areas where traditional Chinese Buddhist temples had been spared. (Personal communication Sharif Wang Yongliang, Yinchuan 1991.)

8 'China's Islam' (no author given) *Beijing Review* 33/28 July 9-15 1990 p 25.

9 *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (Far East)* (henceforth FE) FE/0178 June 10, 1988 from Xinhua News Agency

10 It can be argued that decades of secularisation have rendered the term often used, 'Muslim Republics,' inappropriate.

become more significant. At the time of writing the role of Islam in former Soviet Central Asia hangs in the balance with tensions between secular nationalist and Islamic movements, secular governments following traditional Soviet patterns and the new Great Game, competition between Iran and Turkey for influence.

It is very difficult to arrive at a precise figure for the number of people who can properly be called Muslim in China today. The term Muslim is used rather loosely to include both those who are active believers and those who belong to communities which by tradition have been Muslim for centuries, irrespective of whether the majority of the members are believers or regular mosque attenders. This is unavoidable because the government of the People's Republic of China has never collected statistics on religious adherence. The only figures available are those for the populations of ethnic minority groups which are nominally and traditionally Muslim. It does however conform to the reality of China today: many who at least until recently considered themselves to be loyal communists and possibly even atheists identify themselves closely with their ethnic communities and with the Islamic culture of those communities. Communist Party members are also believers and some have become Ahongs.

The Chinese authorities recognise ten ethnic groups as Muslim, the Hui, Uyghur, Kazakh, Uzbek, Tajik, Tartar, Khalkhas, Dongxiang, Salar, and Baoan. The total number of Muslims within the borders of China today has been officially estimated at about 14 million but many scholars consider this to be a considerable underestimate as there are still villages and other communities petitioning to be recognised as Hui or other ethnic groups.¹¹ Estimates of the Muslim population of China before the Second World War often used a round figure of 50 million, giving rise to the suggestion of genocide. The problem with this figure is that there was no reliable census in China before 1953 and it is far from clear on which statistics if any this was based.¹² The 1990 census statistics suggest a Muslim population of over 17 million, and a round figure for the 1990s of 20 million Muslims in China could well be a reasonable working estimate.

11 See Dru C. Gladney review of Thomas Heberer *China and its National Minorities: Autonomy or Assimilation*, *China Quarterly* 133, March 1993, p 174-5.

12 Detailed analysis in Zhang Tianlu et al *Zhongguo Muslin renkou* (China's Muslim Population, Yinchuan 1991).

Table 1: Populations of main Muslim ethnic groups¹³

	1990	1982
Hui	8,602,978	7,227,022
Uyghur	7,214,431	5,962,814
Kazakh	1,111,718	908,414
Kyrgyz	141,549	113,999
Tajik	33,538	26,503

The Hui of Ningxia

The Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region is the provincial level administrative unit of China with the highest population of Hui and the largest concentrated Hui residential area. In the census of 1990, the total Hui population of the autonomous region was 1,524,448 which was 32.74% of the total population of the province and 18% of the total Hui population of China. Although the Hui are distributed throughout the region, there are two main areas of concentration: one in the southern mountainous area which has the almost purely Hui county of Jinghai where the Hui occupy 96.9% of the total population, and Tongxin, Haiyuan and Xiji counties; the other in Wuzhong and Lingfu counties in the Yinchuan area in the north of the region in which the Hui populations are respectively 55.2 and 48% of the total¹⁴

Ningxia is on the upper and middle reaches of the Yellow River and is approximately 66,000 square kilometres in area. Before it was created an Autonomous Region in 1958, it was part of Gansu province and the city now called Yinchuan was known as Ningxia. The region has water and mineral resources including gypsum and ranks number five in China for coal stocks. Irrigation and canals on the Yinchuan plain date back to the Qin dynasty (221–207 BCE) and were further developed during the Han, Tang and Xixia dynasties that followed: because of its fertility, the Ningxia plain is known locally as 'the Jiangnan on the Wall.'¹⁵ Agriculture in the region

13 *Beijing Review* Vol 33 No 52 December 24–30 1990 p 30 citing 1990 census figures.

14 'Dangdai Zhongguo' congshu bianji bu (ed) *Dangdai Zhongguo de Ningxia* (Contemporary Ningxia) Zhongguo sheke chubanshe, Beijing 1990 p 1–2; Hu Zhenhua (1993) p 38–41.

15 Jiangnan, that part of China immediately to the south of the Yangzi River, is China's most productive and fertile area. Similarly, Turfan is known as the Jiangnan of Xinjiang.

includes wheat and, surprisingly for such a northerly location, paddy rice (irrigation from the Yellow River is important for both), hemp, oil bearing crops, melons and other fruit. The grasslands are a fur and skin producing area including Tibet lambskins. Sheep are particularly important in the foothills of the Helan mountains and tree planting has been important, both as an end in itself and as a barrier to the southward drift of the desert.¹⁶

To the Han officials who control the region, Ningxia is relatively unproductive and backward in commerce, education, culture, science and technology. They complain of fast population growth and ignorance of the concept of a commodity economy. The cities on the bend of the Yellow River and surrounding rural areas have developed much more quickly than the mountainous areas of southern Ningxia. Southern Ningxia has 59% of the area and 43% of the population of the autonomous region, but the gross value of industrial and agricultural output was only 9.6% of the regional total in 1987.¹⁷

The importance attached to the promotion of a Muslim region can be seen in Ningxia's 30th Anniversary celebrations on 25th of October 1988. The People's Bank of China announced the issue of a commemorative one *yuan* copper-nickel coin which depicts the great mosque in Yinchuan on one side and two young Hui women on the other and was intended mainly for use in the region.¹⁸ Celebratory speeches inevitably praised 'nationality solidarity' and unity, claimed that disputes between the Hui and Han nationalities 'have all but vanished' and pointed out that Hui officials occupy most senior posts in the autonomous region and its cities, but at a meeting with cadres in Yinchuan on 27th September, senior CCP figure Wang Zhen, former commander of Chinese military units in Xinjiang called for measures to increase the number of cadres from minority nationalities and train them properly. It was revealed that in spite of the fact that Hui people account for 32.5% of the total population of the region, they constitute only 14.5% of the cadres, although most of the leading posts at all levels are occupied by Hui-origin cadres.¹⁹

16 'Ningxia huabao' (ed) *Zhongguo Ningxia*, Yinchuan 1983/4.

17 FE/0277 October 8, 1988.

18 FE/0262 September 21, 1988.

19 FE/0271 B2/8 1/10/88.

Religious Observance

Religious observance was stifled during the Cultural Revolution which began in 1966, many mosques were completely destroyed and others lost much of their land and buildings. For Muslims in China, the most important feature of the reform programme associated with Deng Xiaoping has been the possibility of rebuilding or reopening mosques. There are probably no accurate figures for these losses, but some examples will illustrate the point.

The Nanguan (South Gate) Mosque is the largest in Yinchuan, the capital of the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. In the courtyard is a shop where the Qur'an and other devotional materials are on sale. On the wall of the shop is a display of photographs depicting the destruction of the mosque in the mid nineteen sixties, the makeshift prayer hall made up of mats and tables that the congregation used on the site and the reconstruction of the mosque in a middle eastern style in the mid nineteen eighties. In March 1991, it was fully active with a *madrasa* in which a dozen or so boys were visible reading aloud from the Qur'an.²⁰ Also in Yinchuan, the Xiguan (West Gate) mosque was rebuilt in 1981 in a middle eastern style. According to the Ahong it dates back to the 1880s. He had taken part in the *Hajj* in 1987 and one other Ahong had also been to Mecca. His congregation was approximately one hundred on ordinary days but over three hundred on Fridays.²¹ In Yinchuan there are twelve or so mosques and most were destroyed in the Cultural Revolution with rebuilding commencing in the nineteen eighties.²² Construction of mosques continues in Yinchuan and a new mosque, the Xincheng Nanmen (New Town South Gate) on Mancheng Street South, was being built in September 1992.²³

The Wuzhong Mosque in Wuzhong, a busy market town south of Yinchuan was built in 1778 and extended twice during the late nineteenth century. After severe damage during the Cultural Revolution it was reestablished in 1979 and further repairs carried out in 1987, but the present day mosque occupies far less land than the original.²⁴ The Najiahu Mosque in Najiahu village near Wuzhong was badly damaged

20 Personal observation March 16, 1991.

21 Interview March 18, 1991.

22 Information from Sharif Wang Yongliang, Ningxia Academy of Social Sciences Hui History Research Institute, Yinchuan. March 18, 1991.

23 Personal observation September 18, 1992.

24 Interview with Ahong March 15, 1991.

during the Cultural Revolution but the prayer hall remained untouched, a mixture of Chinese and Islamic architecture.²⁵

The Great Mosque in Tongxin, a predominantly Hui town in central Ningxia, was a Buddhist temple during the Mongol conquest and has that appearance. It was rededicated as a mosque when it was taken over by local Muslims after the expulsion of the Mongols and now follows the *Yihewani* sect. It was not damaged at all during the Cultural Revolution and the congregation are proud of their role in defending it. According to the Ahong, the daily congregation is normally a few dozen with hundreds on a Friday. During my visit there were about twenty men awaiting the call to prayer.²⁶

Islamic literature is on sale in Muslim centres in China but with restrictions. *Zhongguo Muslim* 中国穆斯林 (Chinese Muslim) is published nationally in Chinese and Uyghur and the Qur'an in Chinese and Arabic and commentaries and other classic devotional literature such as the writings of the Ming dynasty Muslim scholar Wang Daiyu are published openly and on sale in the main state bookshops in Ningxia and Gansu as well as in Beijing. Religious publications are also available in Urumqi bookshops, but in Kashghar there are no Islamic books at all in the New China bookshop, the main state outlet, apart from a Chinese language book, *Stories from the Qur'an*. In the Kashghar bazaar, religious works in Arabic and Chinese can be bought from street stalls, and in Linxia, the main Hui area of southwestern Gansu and Guanghe, a nearby county town, new and secondhand books on religious topics and Arabic language courses are on sale from barrows or stalls on the main streets.²⁷ There is also a widespread network of underground or unofficial Islamic publishing with Ahongs publishing and distributing their own books, but these are difficult for outsiders to obtain.²⁸

Chinese officials treat the Muslim sects as if they were political factions. There are considered to be six Muslim factions in Ningxia, the *Gedimu*, *Yihewani*, *Hufuye*, *Zhehelinye*, *Gadelinye* and *Sailaifeiye*. In the view of CCP officials, the 1.4 million Islamic Hui people in Ningxia belong to six factions, all Sunni, the largest faction having 33,000 members and the smallest 1,000. Government policy is to treat

25 Interview with 91 year old Ahong, March 15 1991.

26 Interview with Ahong and with the Chairman of the Ningxia branch of the Chinese People's Consultative Council, September 19, 1992.

27 Based on observations in March 1991 and September 1992. Changes in state policy towards Islam could alter the open availability of books at any time.

28 Information from Sharif Wang Yongliang, Ningxia Academy of Social Sciences.

factions equally, with each faction having its own representatives in people's congresses and the local committees of the Chinese Peoples Political Consultative Conference, an organisation designed to integrate non-Communists into the Chinese polity. In practice this means that the *shaykhs* of Sufi *menhuan* whose role in these orders is necessarily covert may also have an open political role in an organisation like the CPPCC.

In a report on Islam in Ningxia, the official Xinhua (New China) News Agency claimed that fights between the factions were now rare, but disclosed that there had been a clash between two groups in 1984 over the building of a mosque in Xiji county, in the poor and overwhelmingly Hui Guyuan region of southern Ningxia in 1984. Over 1,000 fought over the building of a mosque, two people were killed and over a hundred injured. Other sources suggest that the conflict may have been more serious and not such an exception. According to an article in the journal *Liaowang* (Outlook), conflicts between Muslims in Ningxia frequently take place because of religious interests, and some have led to bloodshed. From 1978 onwards, two factions in the 'Zhenherenye' group in Xiji county clashed on 22 occasions, with several hundred and sometimes even over 10,000 people participating. These clashes left three people dead and five others seriously wounded. 'Generally the local government does not intervene in religious disputes, which are resolved through the mediation of religious organisations. Major cases undermining production and causing casualties are dealt with according to law. As a result of proper handling, no large-scale religious conflicts have occurred since 1986.'

Mu Yilan, Chairman of the Islamic Association of Ningxia is quoted as saying that there were no essential differences among the factions, only the conduct of religious rituals are conducted. For example, one faction performs elaborate religious ceremonies while another may simplify them. 'Just that - nothing more serious.' 'Although the differences are minor, conflicts among the factions used to be fierce, sometimes culminating in armed fights, mostly for economic benefits or to win people over from other factions, said Mu.'

'People of different factions perform their religious ceremonies in separate mosques, but there are already exceptions. One Djuma day (Friday), this reporter was invited to the largest mosque in Tongxin county where several hundred Muslims

were reading the scriptures. According to the presiding Imam, they belonged to two factions – one prefers to do the chanting aloud, and the other, silently. But for the new policy they would never have entered the same mosque, he said.²⁹

While it is in the interest of the Chinese authorities to minimise both the differences between the groups and the seriousness of the conflicts, it is clear that the splits and schisms manifested in the nineteenth century by the Sufi and other orders are as powerful as ever at the end of the twentieth century.

Islamic Education

Areas where there are concentrations of Hui Muslims usually have separate primary and middle schools for their children although the curriculum is supposed to be the same as in the mainstream schools. The issue of education for girls and women is as controversial in Chinese Islam as elsewhere. Single sex schools for girls were closed during the Cultural Revolution but reopened in 1987 to conform with Hui disapproval of co-education. Their closure for ten years 'substantially affected schooling and literacy among Hui women' as girls were not allowed to attend coeducational schools by their parents.³⁰

Among the newly reopened girls' schools is the Tongxin Girls' Hui Middle School, a boarding school in Tongxin. The school is spacious, modern and well equipped for northwest China. All the girls board as they are from the Hui villages around Tongxin. Before the school was opened many parents refused to allow their daughters to attend mixed schools and Hui village girls missed out on an education. Other rural Hui children attend the Tongxin Number 2 Hui Middle School which has 1100 pupils, only 10% of them girls because of the success of the Girls' Schools. Pupils here also board, go home on Saturday afternoons and return to the school on Sunday evening. Children who live in the town attend the Tongxin Number 1 Hui Middle School. The effect of mixed schools on Hui girls is illustrated by the school attendance and literacy figures for Guyuan prefecture in southern Ningxia. It is an overwhelmingly Hui region, but only 4.7% of school pupils were Hui girls in 1986. Half the Hui women

29 *Dangdai Zhongguo de Ningxia* p 2-3; FE/0249 September 6th, 1988; FE/0250 September 7, 1988; *Zhongguo Tongxun She*, HK 6 Dec 88; FE/0331 December 10 1988.

30 Xinhua News Agency in FE/0178 June 9 1988.

were illiterate whereas the illiteracy rate for women as a whole in the region is 34.4%.³¹

As part of the resurgence of Islam in China, eight Islamic academies for the training of clergy were opened. By 1988, four hundred students had been enrolled on four to five year courses which include the Qur'an, Islamic culture and management. The aim of the academies was described as training 'researchers, teachers and high-ranking personnel engaged in international Islamic academic exchanges.'³² Many of the students are Ahongs who have been in post for some time but were unable to obtain formal theological training because of restrictions on religion during the Cultural Revolution.³³

The Ningxia Islamic Academy *Ningxia Yisilanjiao jingxueyuan* 宁夏伊斯兰教经学院 is situated in the Western suburbs of Yinchuan, occupies 40.5 mu of land and the building has been made possible by funding provided by the Islamic Development Bank. The government of the Autonomous Region also authorised a bridging loan of 2,300,000 *renminbi* to enable construction to take place. Further technical support was provided by visits from a Saudi engineer in February 1986 and October 1988.

Since the opening of the Academy, it has recruited seventy six students, among them the twenty six students of the class of 1985 who graduated ahead of time and in 1989 there were said to be fifty still studying in academy and thirty one teaching and administrative staff.³⁴ In March 1991, the Academy was complete, the library was well stocked with books in Arabic and Chinese but there were no staff or students to be seen, possibly because it was the beginning of Ramadan. However, in September 1992, the building still looked unused and although there were a few staff on duty there was no sign of the hundred students reported to have been enrolled by then.³⁵

The Tongxin Arabic Language School in Tongxin, central Ningxia, was founded in 1985, also with the aid of the Islamic Development

31 FE/0178 June 9, 1988; Author's visit to Tongxin schools and discussion with teaching staff September 19, 1992. The pupils at the mixed school were lively and third year boys were able to hold a reasonably sophisticated conversation in English. The girls at the single sex school were shy but able to cope perfectly well when asked questions by a stranger who had dropped in without warning.

32 Xinhua News Agency 29/11/88 in FE/0328 December 7, 1988.

33 Information from Sharif Wang Yongliang, Ningxia Academy of Social Sciences.

34 Li Xuezhong and Yang Jixian 'Ningxia Yisilanjiao xueyuan shouyuan diaocha yu sikao' p 173-184 in Yu Zhengui and Zhang Yongqing *Da Xibei duiwai kaifang de xin silu* Ningxia Renmin Chubanshe, Yinchuan, 1989, English subtitle 'New Thinking.'

35 Personal observation March 18, 1991, September 18, 1992.

Bank to promote economic and cultural exchange between China and Islamic countries of the Middle East. The design of the building is very similar to the Islamic Academy in Yinchuan, but unlike the academies, its role is almost entirely secular. It is designated as a 'secondary vocational school' specialising in training translators and interpreters at elementary and intermediate level, although the students are of university age. It is the only state run specialist Arabic school in China: there are privately run ones in Shaanxi province and elsewhere. The three years of study includes Arabic language, history, Islamic general knowledge and nationality theory and policies and students graduating are said to have a satisfactory knowledge of spoken and written Arabic. Some have already been employed by organisations dealing with the Middle East.³⁶

By 1988 student numbers had grown to ninety eight, mostly of Hui nationality, and there were twenty nine staff. In 1992 the 260 students were all Hui and three of its graduates were working in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as Arabic translators. Although many of the students are from Ningxia, there are some from Xi'an and in 1992 there was one from as far away as Shenyang in northeast China. Teachers at the school have studied in Kuwait, Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia. There was no Arabic native speaker at the school in 1991 but they were hoping to be able to employ one in the near future and a sumptuous suite of rooms had been prepared in expectation. Teaching materials are provided by the Foreign Languages College in Beijing supplemented by newspapers and other materials from the Arab world.³⁷

Muslim Communities and the Economic Reform Programme

Mosques in Ningxia have benefited from the move towards a market orientated economy by developing business interests which have helped to finance their religious activities. Mohammed Younuqi Bao Jingui, the Director of the administrative council of the Nanguan mosque in Yinchuan which is the longest established and largest mosque in the region, is reported as having said, 'We aim to lighten the financial burden on the state and local Islamic believers.' The mosque has an allocation from public funds of 4,000 yuan, but needs at least four times that amount. In August 1986, the Nanguan

36 *Jiaoyu da cidian* (Encyclopaedia of Education), Beijing 1992.

37 Interview with Acting Head Teacher Mahmud Ma Xiao, September 19, 1992.

mosque set up a Muslim services company. It manages an Islamic hotel with 60–70 beds, a canteen, grocery, shop and clinic and by 1988 had made a profit of over 100,000 yuan. The regional government gives preferential treatment to mosques involved in business, including tax exemption for the first three to five years. The mosque employs thirty six local people and the poor, the young and the elderly receive free medical treatment in the clinic. Plans for developing the business interests of the mosque include the creation of an Islamic bazaar in Yinchuan supported by foreign investment.³⁸

Hui Muslims in Qinghai have opened their own Islamic bank, the Muslim savings deposit centre run by the Xining City Bank of Industry and Commerce. The bank took 150,000 *renminbi* in deposits in its first month. Some Muslims were wary of the new bank but the provincial party secretary Yin Kesheng, attempted to reassure them by saying,

'We must run the Muslim savings centre as a place with genuine minority nationality and Muslim characteristics. Muslim money should be used for Muslim affairs . . . More bonus savings schemes should be organised in view of the needs of religious believers.'³⁹

The Hui people have a tradition of involvement in trade and finance and are likely to prosper in the more open financial environment created by the reform programme.

Muslim Communities and International Relations

The Muslim community has acquired a new significance as relations with the Islamic world become more important to China. In 1988, Ningxia was examining the possibility of developing an Islamic special economic zone to compete with Shenzhen and the other development areas on the south China coast, and a feasibility report on an Islamic special economic zone with Yinchuan as its centre was submitted to the State Council. The basis for development was to be coal and electric power reserves and investment would be open mainly to Islamic countries, particularly Middle East and African oil producers.⁴⁰

38 FE/0191 June 30, 1988.

39 FE/0398 March 2, 1989.

40 FE/0270 September 9 1988.

China has been developing relations with the major powers in the Middle East and a Muslim regional delegation from Ningxia visited Turkey in 1988.

'During a meeting in Istanbul on 20th July with a Chinese delegation of the Ningxia Hui autonomous region, Chairman of the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce, Yalim Erez said that the present annual trade volume of 300m dollars between the two countries has been far behind their fast-developing political and friendly relations. Erez told Bai Lichen, head of the Chinese delegation, that the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce has decided to send a delegation to China between October and November to probe the possibility of increasing the trade. The Chinese delegation arrived on the 19th after a visit to Hungary. The delegation called on the Governor of the Istanbul province Cahit Bayar on the 20th.'⁴¹

China established diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia. This was announced in July 1990 as foreign minister Qian Qichen left Beijing for a surprise visit to Saudi Arabia which still has full diplomatic relations with Taiwan and is a major source of its oil imports. Saudi Arabia opened a trade mission in Beijing in August 1989 'and the Saudi rulers are known to want stronger links with China's Muslim population of about 40 million.'

China's relations with Iran have also become crucial. In the field of nuclear cooperation, China has sold Iran equipment capable of producing fissile material, and reports in the Washington Post suggest that Iran had sent 20 nuclear technicians to China for training. It is generally accepted that China sold Iran Silkworm missiles during Gulf War although there is no published evidence for this. There have been regular high level meetings between senior Iranian and Chinese political and military personnel. For example, on July 8 1991 Prime Minister Li Peng met President Rafsanjani in Tehran. On September 6 1991 a Chinese Parliamentary delegation visited Tehran.⁴²

China's Islamic Gamble

Since the mid-nineteen eighties, and particularly since the suppression of the democracy movement in Beijing in June 1989 and the

41 FE/0223 August 6, 1988.

42 *Independent* (London) November 1 1991.

consequent condemnation of western countries, China has attempted to make its relationships with Muslim states, especially Iran, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, and with international Islamic organisations such as the Islamic Development Bank even closer. This policy may be a massive gamble. If it is to succeed, the Chinese government must convince the Islamic world that Muslims in China are free to worship and to live as Muslims and there is therefore pressure to grant a degree of real autonomy to Muslim communities in China. So far, this has been a public relations success. A visiting delegation of the World Islamic League in 1984 pronounced itself well satisfied at the piety of Chinese Muslims and their freedom to worship, and diplomats from Muslim countries are regular attenders at Beijing's mosques.

The problem for the Chinese authorities is that they cannot be certain of the loyalty of Muslims to China. Muslim communities within the boundaries of present-day China, especially the Uyghurs, have a history of secessionist movements. Any suggestion of secession is anathema to the leadership in Zhongnanhai, China's Kremlin, who regard the integrity of Chinese territory, defined as the limits established in the eighteenth century as inviolable. Tibetan demands for autonomy are the best known example of what Beijing terms 'ethnic separatism,' but it is also a major political concern in Xinjiang.

For China's leadership, there is particular danger in encouraging or permitting the expansion of Islam among Turkic speaking ethnic groups such as the Uyghurs, Kazakhs and Kyrgyz. Islam is an essential component of their ethnic identity and differentiates them from the majority Han Chinese population. Links with other members of the same ethnic groups in former Soviet Central Asia and in Afghanistan are likely to encourage ethnic and national consciousness. The enthusiasm for such a prominent Islamic leader as President Rafsanjani in Kashgar suggests that this consciousness is developing rapidly.

The Hui are considered to be more loyal to China than Turkic speaking Muslims and less likely to attempt to secede. This may be wishful thinking as the Hui insurrections in the 1860s and 1930s were in part against Han Chinese domination and the Hui have also played a leading role in demonstrations against the Han in Xinjiang, but religious activity is discouraged less in Gansu and Ningxia than in Xinjiang because the Chinese authorities are not as concerned about possible Hui secessionist activity.

Northwest China is aggressively marketing itself abroad in an attempt to bridge the immense gap between the standard of living of the interior and coastal regions. People in Ningxia, Gansu, Qinghai and Xinjiang (and to a lesser extent in Shaanxi) are conscious of being remote from the centres of power and decision making and of the lack of opportunities for travel, academic exchange and trading opportunities compared with their counterparts in what they term the 'coastal regions.' Because it is less easy to attract European, Japanese or American investment to the region than to the now prospering southeast, the five north western provincial governments are looking directly to both the Middle East and the Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union for trade and investment. There has been a move to have Ningxia, the Hui heartland, declared an Islamic Special Economic Zone, and several books published within the last few years have promoted the development of economic relations with mainland Asia to the west. One of them, published in Urumqi, has the unequivocal title *Head for the Middle East*.⁴³

Xinjiang has a pivotal role to play in this development, if only because of its geographical location on China's northwest frontier. During the Urumqi Trade Fair, which was held from September 1st to the 10th 1992, businessmen from throughout China and many from the former USSR came to Urumqi for what appears to have been a highly successful event. A number of border towns were given permission to open for cross border trade and the first to open, at Korla, began trading during the fair. Border trade is now at an unprecedentedly high level. Urumqi has a trading area used exclusively by Russian pedlars, and thousands of Chinese entrepreneurs are moving into former Soviet Central Asia in search of business opportunities.⁴⁴

The question that must be in the minds of China's leaders is how far they can exploit Islamic sentiment for trade and investment without encouraging Uyghur and Hui identity to the point at which they will have to concede genuine political autonomy. Beijing has already had to concede a degree of economic autonomy to the powerhouse Shenzhen Special Economic Zone in Guangdong

43 Zhang Baoguo et al *Zou xiang Zhongdong* Urumqi, 1990. See also Yu Zhengui and Zhang Yongqing *Da Xibei duiwai kaifang de xin silu* (New Thinking on Opening the Northwest to Foreign Countries), Yinchuan, 1989 with English subtitle 'New Thinking' and Yu Zhengui, Zhang Yongqing *Zhongguo Xibei diqu kaifa yu xiang Xi kaifang* (Developing Northwest China and opening to the West), Yinchuan, 1992.

44 Personal observation during visit to Urumqi Trade Fair, September 8-10 1992.

province. With unrest in Tajikistan and the other Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union threatening to spill over into Xinjiang, and emigré and internal independence movements looking for political opportunities to promote their causes, the authorities in Zhongnanhai will be hoping that speedy economic growth and new prosperity for the northwestern regions will buy off demands for independence or autonomy. The history of the region suggests that religious and political activity is likely to follow the new trade routes: the Muslim revivalist movements, including Sufism, came to China by this route. Beijing will then be faced with new political challenges from its Muslim subjects and with no obvious way of responding without risking the integrity of China.

Islam and Islamic revivalism continue to be powerful agents of changes with in China. A dispatch from the Xinhua news agency in Beijing on February 20th 1994 reported the conclusion of the trial of twenty two people charged with 'gang fighting' in Xiji county in southern Ningxia. The trial was held at the Intermediate People's Court in Guyuan Prefecture which includes Xiji and those charged included Ma Liesun, vice-chairman of the regional Chinese People's Political Consultative Committee who is also on the Standing Committee of the CPPCC, two academics – Ma Fuli, associate professor at the Ningxia College of Education and Ma Jie, lecturer at the Northwest Number 2 Nationalities Institute – and a farmer, Ma Rucheng. These four were sentenced respectively to fifteen years, life imprisonment, twenty years and life imprisonment for crimes which included murder, the manufacture and purchase of guns and ammunition and organising gang warfare. During the clashes which took place in May 1992, forty nine people were killed, thirty were injured and two people are still missing. The police claimed that they had confiscated 5,442 guns, 7362 bullets and 118 home made shells and bombs from the accused.⁴⁵

The four principal defendants were an odd collection to appear together in court and the Xinhua account gave no explanation for how they came to be involved with each other and does not even hint at the reason for the violence. In fact, the conflict was a dispute between Hui Muslims about the succession to the leadership of one of the branches of a Sufi *menhuan*.

This was not the first incidence of violent conflict in Xiji in recent times. In an earlier report, in September 1988, Xinhua claimed that

45 FE/1928 February 22 1994.

skirmishes between Sufi orders, common in the last century and the early part of this century, were now rare, but disclosed that there had been a clash between two groups in 1984 over the building of a mosque in Xiji. At least a thousand people fought over the building of a mosque and two were killed and over a hundred injured. Some sources suggest that the conflict may have been even more serious and that such violence is not at all unusual. An article in the journal *Liaowang* (*Outlook*), which is published in Beijing, referred to frequent and bloody conflicts between two factions in the *Zhenherenye* (Jahriyya in Arabic) order in Xiji county since 1978. They had fought on twenty two occasions with hundreds and occasionally as many as 10,000 people taking part. The clashes left three people dead and five others seriously wounded. No major incidents were reported between 1986 and 1992.⁴⁶

The cause of the 1992 conflict was the struggle for control that followed the death, at the age of ninety, of the patriarch of one of the Jahriyya *menhuan*, Ma Teng'ai, who in addition to being the *shaykh* of his order was a vice-chairman of the CPPCC in Ningxia, an excellent illustration of the way the traditional ambiguity and duality of the Hui identity has persisted into present-day China. The battle which the men were charged with masterminding was in fact the second clash that year between the two factions contending for succession and five people had already died in the first clash. During the second, more bloody, dispute in May 1992 a mosque was occupied for several days by armed supporters of one of the contending groups.⁴⁷

All over northwestern China, Sufi *menhuan* are reclaiming land confiscated during the collectivisation programme of the nineteen fifties and rebuilding the *gongbei* tomb complexes dedicated to their *shaykhs*, a process which often leads to conflict over which group has the right to the land and who has the right to succeed to the leadership of the *menhuan*. The history of the Hui and of their sects suggests that this conflict is unlikely to disappear. As trade and industry in the northwest develop and the new Hui elite become more prosperous, control of a sect or *menhuan* could lead to an unprecedented level of wealth and power.

46 *Dangdai Zhongguo de Ningxia* p 2-3; FE/0249 September 6, 1988; FE/0250 September 7, 1988; *Zhongguo Tongxun She*, HK 6 Dec 88, FE/0331 December 10 1988.

47 Additional information from Wang Jianping, University of Lund, formerly of the Institute of World Religions, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Jews and the Blue-capped Hui

Relations between the Jewish and Muslim communities of China were close for much of their history. In spite of doctrinal and scriptural differences, Muslims and Jews were probably closer to each other than to the majority Han community in which they found themselves. Chinese Jews and Chinese Muslims originated in the same areas of the Middle East and Central Asia, that is the Yemen, Persia, Bukhara or Samarkand, and although Jews used Hebrew and Muslims used Arabic for liturgical purposes, their common spoken *lingua franca* was Persian. This use of Judaeo-Persian or Judaeo-Tajik remains in the present-day Jewish community in Samarkand and among exiles in the United States.¹ There is some confusion between Muslims and Jews in the Chinese histories and the term Huihui is sometimes used for both. Donald Leslie, the foremost western student of Chinese Judaism has pointed out that, 'Their monotheism and avoidance of idols, together with the abstention from pork and special slaughtering laws must have made it difficult for other Chinese tell them apart.' Added to this was the use by both communities of terms such as *qingzhensi* 清真寺 and *libaisi* 礼拜寺 for both mosque and synagogue and *zhangjiao* or *manla* for religious leaders although these terms later diverged with *manla* being reserved mainly for trainee imams in Islam. There is disagreement over the degree of intermarriage between Jews and Muslims, and the extent to which the decline of the Jewish community in China can be attributed to its absorption into the Muslim population is still in doubt, although there are a number of references to the fact that the groups calling themselves

1 See Akchurin 1992 and chapter 10 on Language.

lanmao Huihui 藍帽回回 (blue-capped Hui) in the eighteenth century were Jews.² Most of the information on Jews in eighteenth century China has come from letters written by the French Jesuit Jean Domenge (1166–1735) who visited Kaifeng in 1721 and 1722. The letters are unpublished and in the Jesuit archives in Chantilly. Domenge knew Hebrew and 'copied a Judaeo-Persian colophon to the Pentateuch' and took down the oral history of the origins of the community in Kaifeng.³

2 Donald D. Leslie *The Survival of the Chinese Jews* p 38, 108, 112-3, 215.

3 Leslie (1986) p 178.

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Abbreviations

DMB	Goodrich <i>Dictionary of Ming Biography</i>
FE	BBC <i>Summary of World Broadcasts</i> , Part 3 Asia-Pacific (formerly Far East)
HZJS	<i>Huizu jianshi</i>
HHMZWT	<i>Huihui minzu wenti</i>
JIMMA	<i>Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs</i>
Liaoshi	see Tuotuo
Mingshi	see Zhang Tingyu
Yuanshi	see Song Lian

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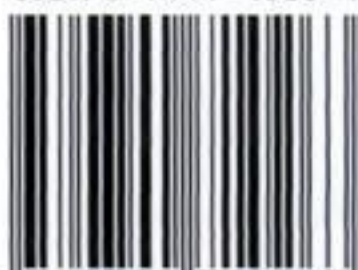
China's Muslim Hui Community

This is a reconstruction of the history of the Muslim community in China known today as the Hui or often as the Chinese Muslims as distinct from the Turkic Muslims such as the Uyghurs. It traces their history from the earliest period of Islam in China up to the present day, but with particular emphasis on the effects of the Mongol conquest on the transfer of central Asians to China, the establishment of stable immigrant communities in the Ming dynasty and the devastating insurrections against the Qing state during the nineteenth century. Sufi and other Islamic orders such as the Ikhwani have played a key role in establishing the identity of the Hui, especially in north-western China, and these are examined in detail as is the growth of religious education and organisation and the use of the Arabic and Persian languages. The relationship between the Chinese Communist Party and the Hui as an officially designated nationality and the social and religious life of Hui people in contemporary China are also discussed.



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